



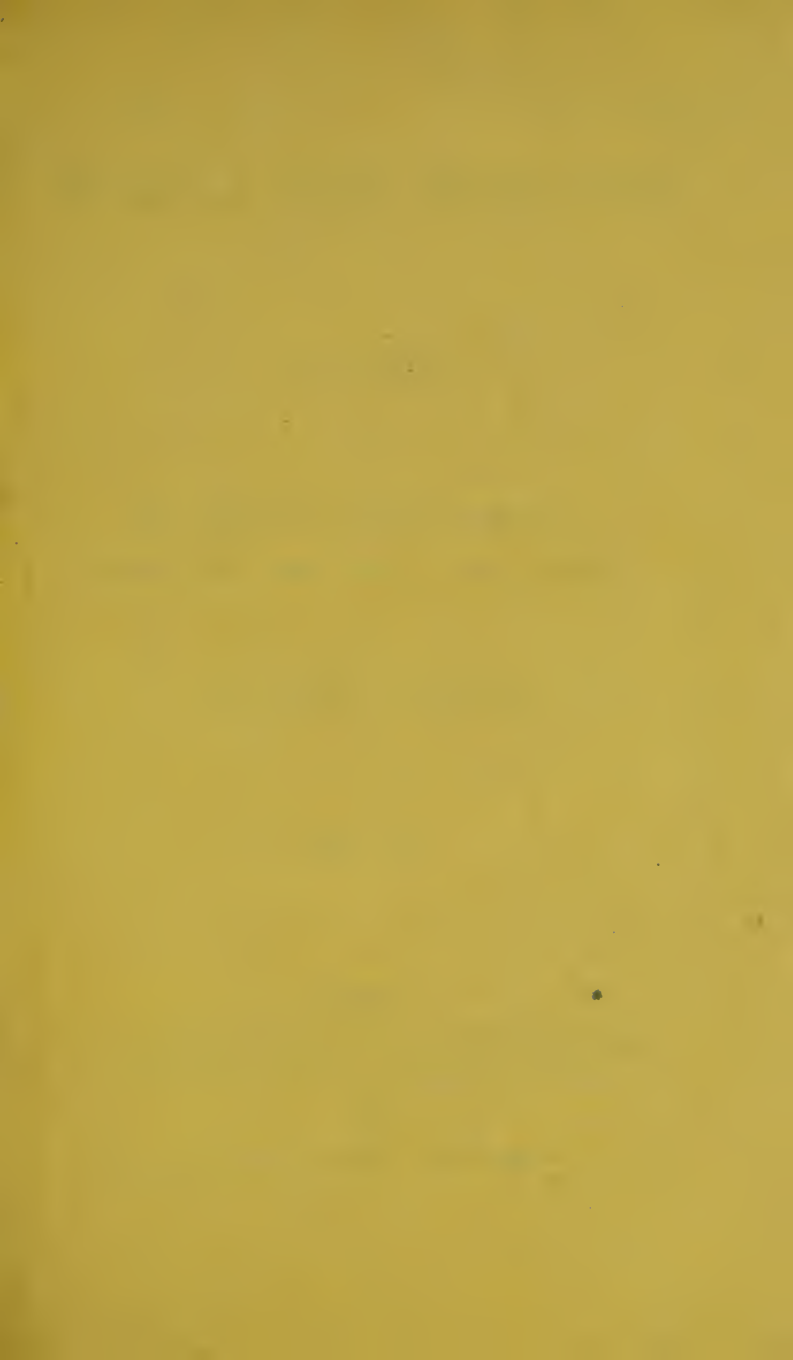


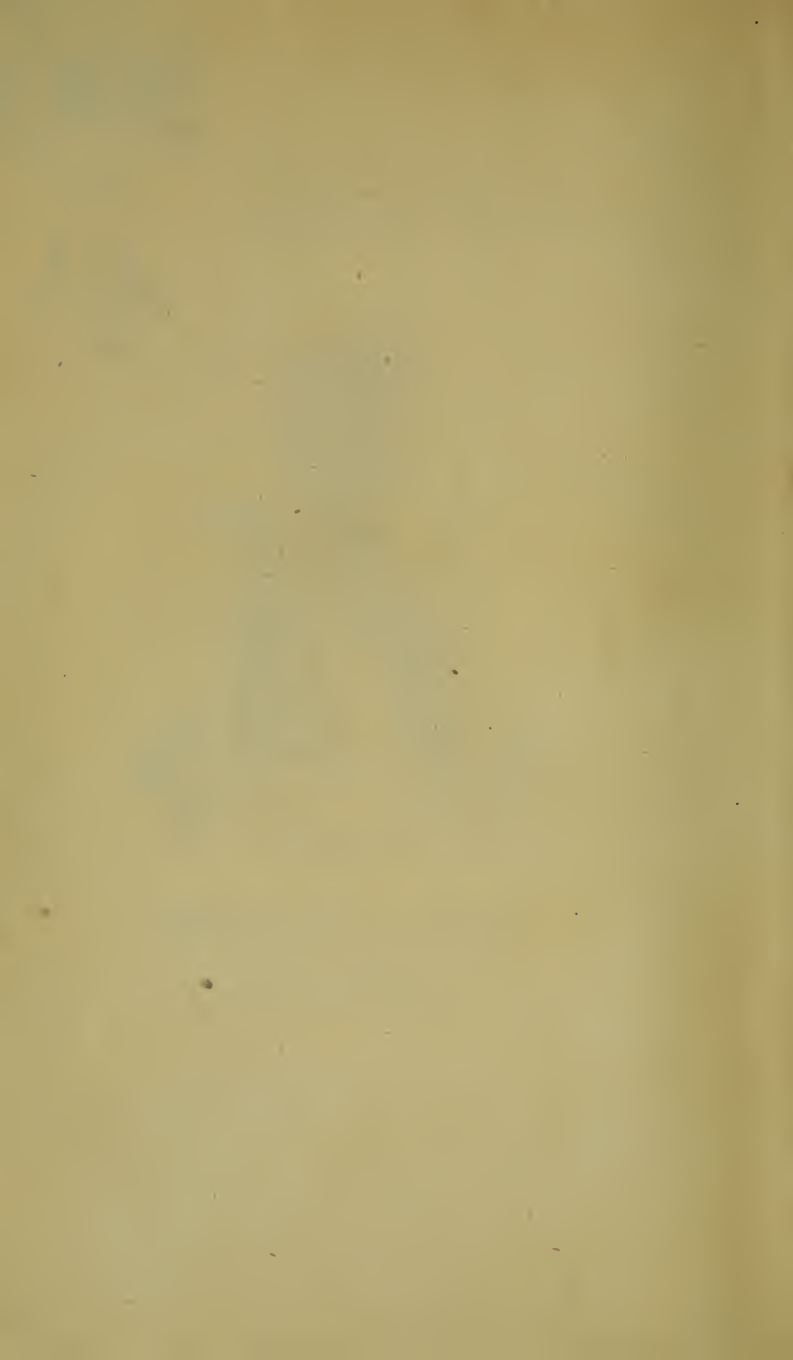
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# HOME & THE HOMELESS.

A NOVEL.

BY CECILIA MARY CADDELL,

Authoress of "THE LITTLE SNOWDROP," "BLIND AGNESE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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## HOME AND THE HOMELESS.

### CHAPTER I.

"A VERY pretty spot indeed!" said Dr. Spencer, striking his walking stick into the ground while he stood with Evelyn beneath the window of the library, and suffered his eyes to roam over the flower garden which we have already described as one of the chief attractions of "The Ferns." "*Your* taste, no doubt, Miss Evelyn, as it would have been your poor mother's before you, (God rest her,) for I well remember how she used to say she would like to end her days in a cottage

covered with clematis, and set in a wilderness of mignonette and geraniums."

"And yet she died in the city—the hot dreary city," Evelyn murmured with a sigh.

"In the hot dreary city," repeated Dr. Spencer—"and—not happy."

"I fear not," replied Evelyn, hesitating a little. "She was uneasy, you may remember about Wyllie, who promised to be very delicate; and she fancied Mr. Sutherland would not trouble himself much about him."

"Which he doesn't," said the Doctor, gruffly. "I can see it by the way he speaks of him even now. He never has cared, and doesn't now care two straws whether the boy were dead or alive."

"It would almost seem so. He has never refused to go to any expense about him, but yet his whole soul was always wrapt up in the eldest."

"Hasn't a soul to wrap anything up in," responded the Doctor shortly; "and, after all, a pretty mess he's made of it with that boy—turned out a regular scamp, I hear."

“He has got into bad company,” said Evelyn, sighing heavily. “His father either will not try, or has not succeeded in detaching him from it, and I tremble to think what the end may be. But shall we go in, Doctor?” she added, as if glad to change the subject. “They are waiting I think, for tea.”

Doctor Spencer was a tall fine looking man of sixty, with grey hair, verging upon white, and a face embrowned by exposure to many an ardent climate. Without being positively handsome, all his features were good, and there was a frankness in his manner and his laughter loving eyes, that won you at once to like him, while the mingled expression of benevolence and resolution which sat upon his brow, and made itself very manifest in the character of his mouth, inclined you at the same time to trust in his goodness, and confide in his power. Nor could even his rough ways, and wholesale animadversion on every creature that came beneath his notice shake you in this confidence. There was an atmosphere of honest good nature round him that robbed his bitterest sarcasms of their sting, making you

feel that so long as he was suffered to scold without retort, he would have your real interests at heart, and if they demanded aid, would employ, as a matter of course, his best energies upon them. He had been in India for many years; but having recently resigned a lucrative situation in the army, had at last settled himself at Southampton, from whence he had already paid more than one flying visit to his old friends at the Ferns. Among these, Evelyn was confessedly his favorite. The world said (and for once the world was not far wrong) that he had loved her mother in his youth, and there was enough of this sentiment still lingering in his strong, warm heart to make him turn with peculiar interest towards her child, from the first hour of their renewed acquaintance. After a little time this ripened to a feeling divided between parental affection and something warmer still, so that at last it seemed as if almost unconsciously to himself, he had given to the living daughter all that love which, under another form, had been the possession of the dead mother. For the same reason also he took considerable interest in Wyllie; and

the boy having been all but given over by his present medical attendants, Dr. Spencer had consented to take him under his care, in hopes of devising some better plan for his recovery than any they had contrived to hit on. For the London faculty in general he entertained, and professed indeed a most profound contempt, grounded chiefly on his horror of humbug to which, however wrongly, he attributed the position of some of them in the fashionable world; and it was quite characteristic of his ideas on this subject that he positively refused to meet them in consultation now; insisting upon their being summarily dismissed before he would even enter into an investigation of Wyllie's case.

We have only to add, in order to put our readers into full possession of the Doctor's character, that he was fond of argument, inclined to be positive, and addicted to quaint and startling views, which he loved to put before his antagonist in such a way as to puzzle and perplex, wherever he felt it impossible to convince or persuade. In this point of view it was one of his especial delights when staying at the 'Ferns'

to have what he called a 'tussle' with Mrs. Montgomerie on the subject of religion, puzzling her exceedingly at times as to the real merit of her pet theories, and yet almost always contriving to leave her in doubt as to whether he had been arguing in earnest, or merely amusing himself at her expense. She was, in fact, precisely the kind of person whom he delighted to mystify, being narrow-minded, and a bigot, as all narrow-minded people are; and invulnerable to argument, simply because she was unequal to follow its windings, or perceive its force. She was what the world understands by the term of a 'serious christian,' and without at all intending it, managed to make her religion oppressive to every one around her. Drawing her own ideas on the subject entirely from the bible, she would not, and in truth she could not comprehend how any one else could arrive by the same means at a different conclusion. The laxity of her son's opinions, therefore, when he came first from college, had puzzled quite as much as it had shocked her. She had not minded enough herself to comprehend or even to enquire into the cause.



She saw the result it is true, but neither knowing its origin, nor guessing at the mental struggle through which it had been attained, instead of wisely leaving him to time and his own earnest love of truth, which having partly betrayed him into his present position would be as likely as not to rescue him from it again in the end, she at once vexed him by harassing cuts at his supposed opinions, and hazarded his scorn by a narrow-minded mode of disputation which could not satisfy the lightest of his doubts, since it never even glanced at the root they sprang from. Feeling herself foiled at last in every attempt to make an impression upon his mind, she changed her tactics, and ceasing to speak at all upon the subject, simply endeavoured to oppose bigotry to scepticism, restricted her amusement to sermons, teetotal parties, and pious meetings for the conversion of the infidel and the Irish, struck out of her visiting list the names of all those whose opinions were not the echo of her own, and inflicted such a martyrdom of mental and bodily quietude upon herself and all around her, on the first day of the week, that Sunday at 'the Ferns'

might have shamed the very sabbath of the Jews themselves in the mode and manner of its keeping. It would have been well if she had reserved this mental regime for her own use and benefit only; but anxious, and very naturally so, for her young daughter's principles in her daily contact with a brother so capable of moulding them to his own, poor Mrs. Montgomerie could devise no better remedy for the danger, than that of including her in all her own weary round of exercises and devotions. It never once occurred to the good lady's mind that the unnatural restraint thus imposed by religion upon her child was the very way to make that child cast off religion altogether. It is easy to anticipate the result. Sermons, lectures, cold and comfortless Sunday dinners, and scripture readings without end, soon taught Lily to look with horror on a system that compelled her to suffer such things, and to turn with an exquisite sense of relief to her brother's free and easy method of considering the subject. Thus, it happened, that he being a man, and a clever man too, while she was yet a child, she easily learned to look up to

him with a reverence which she never gave her mother, became with Frederick, who was nearly ten years her senior, his pupil, and almost his child, and grew up at last amidst all the speculative fancies and dreamy, vague ideas which a mind like hers, destitute of faith, and yet constituted for its possession, would be apt to engraft upon the sterner opinions of her instructor.

But we have kept Evelyn and her guest too long waiting in the garden; therefore we will follow them at once to the library where Mrs. Montgomerie welcomed the doctor as an old and valued friend.

"As in fact we are," cried the doctor. "I don't know of how many years standing, but I am certain, Miss Evelyn here was not much higher than this table, when we two first shook hands together."

"Then pray say as little about it as you possibly can," laughed Evelyn. "When ladies are verging within three years of thirty, it doesn't do to remind them of the time when they were this height or that, my dear doctor."

"Verging on thirty! God bless my soul, it

is impossible, Miss Evelyn. It isn't, and it cannot be ten years since that last sad summer, when I used to see you a slip of seventeen by the side of your dying mother always."

"And yet indeed it is," said Evelyn sadly. "Just ten years this summer. Wyllie was not quite two years old, if you remember."

"So it is—so it is," and Dr. Spencer shook his head as though he would have added, "who'd have thought it?" "Well, well, she shouldn't have gone if I could have helped it; but it was the will of One whose will is always good, and so we may not murmur. She was the sweetest of women. Do you know, Miss Evelyn, you have grown very like her in these last few years, only not half so pretty to my mind," he added, frowning at her until his great eye-brows met, and looking an admiration far greater than his words would have permitted any one to suppose that he was feeling.

"Ah, you don't know what I may have been when I was young," said Evelyn, smiling and shaking her head. "You must make allowance for years and troubles, doctor."

"Fiddlesticks! Miss Evelyn," he answered. "You are as young as you need be. I'll be sworn now that there isn't a grey hair in all those shining tresses."

"Don't be too certain, doctor. I think Honor picked out one this morning, but when I taxed her with it, she said, 'it was only a shuperfluous hair, that had no call to be where it was at all, at all.'"

"Honor is a true woman," said the doctor, "and no doubt considers that a grey hair must be a superfluous impertinence in the chevelure of a young lady. Well, Miss Lily," he added, turning so abruptly upon her that she started, "pray what may *you* be thinking of all this time with those fitful blue eyes of yours fixed upon nothing?"

"Thinking," replied Lily. "Oh, only that I was very glad when you and Evelyn came in to tea; it was so dull before."

"Why, what has been the matter, Lily? This is not Sunday, surely?" said Evelyn, smiling.

"No, but it has been a dreary, working day for all that. There are a parcel of dirty brats

in the village wanting petticoats it seems, and mama has kept me working for their worships until my head aches, and my eyes, I am sure, are as red as an albino's."

"No they're not," said the Doctor, gallantly. "They are as blue as if you had stolen a bit of an Italian sky withal to paint them. So be easy on that score, my dear young lady, I entreat you."

"I will not have you flatter Lily that way," interposed her mother. "If she had sat steadily to her work in the morning, she would not have been obliged to continue it all the evening instead of walking out with Evelyn and you. But to come to more important matters, my dear doctor, I have not heard precisely your opinion of our dear little Wyllie."

"My opinion, ma'am, if you must have it, my opinion is that he has been drugged and drenched by your London big wigs until I wouldn't give the value of a brass farthing for his future chances."

"Indeed that is very strange, doctor, for I am sure my brother has spared no expense."



“Just so, ma’am,” said the doctor coolly; “as you say, he has spared no expense, and the sharks knew well he wouldn’t, and so they’ve come and gone and come again, giving physic and taking fees, until the boy’s constitution could no longer stand it. Why, you’ve only to look at him to see that he’s half way into a decline already by the pure force of coddling.”

“But the doctors are the very first in London, and what more could we do?” cried poor Mrs. Montgomerie, extremely shocked at these heterodox opinions.

“Send them about their business, ma’am, that’s what you could do, and moreover, that’s what you must do, if you want to save the boy’s life, or at all events to preserve him the use of his limbs, which he has almost lost, as it is, for want of being encouraged to try them.”

“Good gracious, doctor! send away the medical men! the first medical men in London! and what then is to be done for the poor child?”

“Nothing, ma’am, just nothing,” replied Dr. Spencer deliberately helping himself to snuff; “you have tried everything you say without

success, now then let us reverse the practise, and see if nothing won't serve the purpose better."

"And suppose the poor child were to die under such outrageous treatment," cried the indignant lady.

"Take my word for it, ma'am," replied the ruthless doctor, "Wyllie is not such a fool as to quit this world just when he is allowed to enjoy it without worry. At any rate, now or never he must make the experiment, or it will be too late; so I've just been trying to persuade Miss Evelyn here, to pack up her traps and come down with me for a month to Southampton, in order better to see what can be done for the boy."

"And, if I may venture to ask it, what do you intend to do for him, doctor?"

"Give him plenty of fresh air and exercise, ma'am."

"Exercise! but do *you* not know that his spine is affected?"

"And do *you* think," replied the doctor, turning his chair short round in his excitement, that he might more entirely frown down his antago-



nist; "do *you* think, Mrs. Montgomerie, you will set it to rights by keeping him all his life long in a state of inaction on a sofa, to say nothing of compelling him to breathe an atmosphere in which nothing short of a pine apple could flourish. Bah, ma'am; I repeat it, the boy has only one chance, and that is fresh air and cold baths, and a judiciously regulated exercise of the muscles, and if Miss Evelyn will only trust me, and give me full permission to do as I please, I have very little doubt but I shall be able to make a man of him at last."

"But Doctor," said Mrs. Montgomerie bridling a little as she spoke; "you are not a married man and Evelyn is not a married woman, and you must excuse me for mentioning it, but it hardly seems correct that under such circumstances you should receive her as a guest at your villa."

"My dear Mrs. Montgomerie," said Evelyn laughing, "you certainly forget my all but thirty years of experience and grey hairs."

"I do not forget, Evelyn; but you know, you don't look anything like your age, and people will naturally judge you by your looks, rather

than by the actual state of the case, of which of course they can know nothing."

"Until the next census comes round, which thank Heaven won't be for five years to come," muttered Lily, "and I shall be married by that time, I hope."

"The proprieties! Bless my soul, I had quite and clean forgotten the proprieties," cried the doctor, much amused at his old friend's prudery. "Well, Mrs. Montgomerie, I quite agree with you that Miss Evelyn doesn't look twenty, but then you know *I* am sixty, and show like seventy, which makes, I should say, *satis superque* in favour of the visit."

"I don't at all agree with you there," Mrs. Montgomerie answered gravely. "Men do marry at sixty, doctor."

"Pshaw! ma'am; only fortune's favorites," the doctor gruffly replied; "and I am too modest to set up for one of the lucky ones. So on the whole, I think Miss Evelyn may consider herself safe for me. What do you say yourself, young lady?"

"I say that for so great an object as Wyllie's health, I am quite ready to encounter a little

gossip," said Evelyn; "though indeed I should think you were too well known at Southampton by this time to be likely to incur it."

"Lucky you are to have the chance of a little novelty," said Lily, with difficulty strangling a yawn; "and after all, if you are so wonderfully afraid of being convicted of matrimonial intentions, why not put on a widow's cap at once; look sentimental and bereaved, and let the Southampton wise one's write you down a widow come to consult the doctor for the health of her only boy."

"As if it signified a straw what fools and gossips say either at Southampton or any where else," said Frank, closing the book over which he had been poring in a distant corner, and approaching the tea-table with a look of scorn for shams and gossips that abashed his sister, and made her feel as if she were caught tripping in his favorite moralities. *He* had a real horror of shams, a real contempt for the silly gossips of the world, and *she* thought she had. It made all the difference, however, in their characters, and it was a fatal one for her—that love of truth which penetrated and strengthened every fibre of

his being lay only surface deep on hers; she could echo his sayings, therefore she thought she shared his feelings, falling into the not uncommon error of confounding talk about morality with the fact of being moral. Hers was not a nature to bring forth goodness as its spontaneous fruit. Frank's mental guidance therefore only led her just so far as her own instincts prompted, but never to anything above them, or beyond them. Nothing, in fact, except religion, and the firm unyielding principles only derivable from religion, could have given depth and tenacity to that unstable mind, and penetrated it with sufficient strength of purpose to rule its own wild promptings by the dictates of a conscientious reason.

"Certainly, it can be of no possible consequence what people say or think," she stammered now, in exculpation of her previous recommendation of a sham.

"Nevertheless, it is always right to avoid provoking public opinion," said her mother stiffly.

"It would be, if public opinion were worth a

rush," Frank answered, coming to his sister's aid.

"It is always worth something, however," replied Evelyn, "for we have no right wantonly to give scandal. I would not therefore brave public opinion without some stern necessity for doing so, but in this case, even if the doctor's seventy years of looks, and sixty years of spotless reputation were not a sufficient safeguard, I think I ought not for a squeamish fear of what the world might say, deny poor Wyllie such a chance of recovery."

"And won't you even have a consultation with the London men, before you try this rash experiment?" sighed Mrs. Montgomery, turning from the question of propriety to another which she considered almost of equal importance, the removing Wyllie with all necessary etiquette from his present medical attendants.

"To what purpose, ma'am? Do you think I have time to throw away in listening to all the old woman's twaddle these fellows are paid a guinea a day for retailing? Bah, my dear lady, I have never had any opinion of the wisdom of

consultations since one, which an old lady, afterwards a patient of my own, described to me as having been called to decide upon her case. After half an hour of private jaw among themselves, they came in a body to her, as they always do, the hungry old cormorants, to swallow their fee, and telling her the Bath waters were the very things for her disease (which of course they made out to be of a most serious description), they advised her to lose no time in trying them. They presented her at the same time with a note of introduction to an eminent physician in that city; which note they assured her would put him quite *au fait* of all the most intricate features of the case. The old lady expressed herself most grateful for their kind attentions, and most docile to their instructions; after which she presented them with their money and the scoundrels went on their way. No sooner were they fairly out of the hall door, however, than my old friend, who was excessively nervous and living in continual terror of *angina pectoris*, thought it would be no great breach of confidence just to unseal the letter and see if they had men-



tioned that as one of her symptoms. She found the missive to contain but a very few lines, too few she thought for the money they'd cost her, but in their way they were explicit enough, being something in this fashion:—

“ ‘ My dear So-and-so,—We send you an old goose to pluck. Keep her six weeks and send her back.—Yours, &c., So-and-so.’ ”

“O, how funny!” cried Lily, who standing rather in awe of the doctor, had not as yet ventured to address him directly.

“Funny!” shouted the indignant doctor, “let me tell you, Miss Lily, it was rascally roguery. Neither more nor less. But they are all alike,” he added, taking a pinch by way of consolation, “rascally rogues all of them. The London ones of course I mean.”

“Of course,” repeated Evelyn maliciously, “The country ones are all angels, no doubt; but are you *quite* sure now, doctor, that you did not manufacture this little anecdote for the benefit of your present audience?”

The doctor was occupied with his snuff box at the moment when she insinuated this objection,

and perhaps that was the reason he vouchsafed it no other answer than such as was conveyed by a very Lord Burleigh like shake of the head.

"Franzie talks of being a doctor some day," Lily observed in her heedless way; "do you think he'll be a rogue too, doctor, if he lives in London."

"Most likely," said he gravely, but with just such an imperceptible laugh in the corner of his grey eye, as showed he knew he was treading on the tender places in Frank's soul. "Why shouldn't he be a rogue as well as the best of 'em, hey?"

"Apparently, you have not much faith in my principles then," said Frank, a little indignantly.

"I have every possible faith in principle, properly so called, my dear sir," Dr. Spencer replied with the least possible stress upon the latter words; "but I confess I have very little faith, or rather, I should say, I have no faith at all in that kind of vague principle which finds its only reason and support in wishy washy talk about the fitness of doing right—the beauty of morality—the



divine teaching of dame nature, and all that sort of thing, upon which your poetical moralisers of the nineteenth century, ring the changes until they almost incline one to hate everything that is good and fair, except indeed the ladies," he added, with a profound bow towards the table, "whom under any circumstances whatever, it is impossible to find otherwise than charming and delightful."

"*My* principle," said Frank, rising, and taking a turn up and down the room as was his custom when the subject in discussion roused him. "*My* principle is, and always has been, to do what is right for right's sake, unmoved by considerations either of fear or favor."

"And a very good principle too (with a few others to back it) no doubt, Mr. Frank. Only having got thus far, we have then to decide upon what is right, and what is wrong; and where is the good angel to do this for us?"

"I shall take good care to settle that point for myself," Frank responded almost haughtily; so entirely did the tone of the conversation jar upon all his pet prejudices and opinions. "Be

it man or angel, rest assured, I will put my mind into fetters for no one."

"But some one else may have quite different ideas as to what is right, and what is wrong," urged Dr. Spencer, "and then of necessity one of you must be in error on the subject. For instance, and not to go farther than present company, Miss Evelyn, here doubtless, will tell you it is no harm to dance upon the Sunday, while Miss Lily, on the contrary, I'll be sworn has been taught to consider it an occupation profane in the extreme, and only fitted for a witch's sabbath."

"Yes, indeed! I am never even allowed to run after Frisky," groaned Lily, with a look so mournfully comic, that no one, save Mrs. Montgomerie, could refrain from laughing.

"There, you see the difference at once," cried the doctor, triumphantly. "And if a difference in such minor matters, how much more inevitable in those where man's passions as well as his prejudices are interested in the decision."

"That's as may be," replied Frank. "But I, for one, at any rate, consider my judgment

in such matters quite as good as any one else's, and therefore, neither priest nor parson shall rule my actions."

"To be sure," cried Lily. "It is quite impossible to mistake! When I am at one with myself and nature, then I have never even the shadow of a doubt that I am right."

"Indeed," said the doctor, with a look of curiosity which the young girl not unnaturally mistook for approbation. "When you are at one with yourself! I am not sure that I ever heard the expression before, so perhaps I may ask in what this thrice blessed oneness consists, and under what circumstances it occurs?"

"Oh," cried Lily, enthusiastically, "It is a thing far easier to be experienced than described. But I ever feel it most when the sun is bright, and the soft summer breeze comes sweeping to me over flowers, or when beneath the midnight skies I bathe my soul in floods of moonlight. Whenever, or wherever, in fact, our great earth-mother spreads her beauty and magnificence around me, then the divine spirit of nature speaks to my heart and penetrates to my inmost

being, and I walk the world in God-like joy, for my soul, self-conscious and lifted above the coarse realities of life, cries out, as it were aloud, that the beautiful is still the true, and the true the beautiful; and therefore that he who adores the one must needs be an absolute worshipper of the other."

"Humph," said the Doctor, "and that's what you call being at one with yourself, is it? Well, I only hope, young lady, that the coarse realities of life will soon bring you to your senses, otherwise you have as good a chance as any one I ever met with, of worshipping this new fangled god or goddess of yours in a mad house."

"But the Sabbath," urged Mrs. Montgomerie, returning to the only part of the subject which she cared for or understood. "About the Sabbath, there can be no question, since we find our mode of keeping it in the Bible."

"Very good history, no doubt," Frank answered contemptuously. "Yet, no reason either why I should square my practice by its precepts."

"Good history!" his mother almost screamed

in her horror. "Good history do you call it? The book inspired by God himself."

"Madre mia, that is just what I deny. The fact of its having been inspired."

"Never mind Mr. Frank, my dear madam," the Doctor observed, in his most provoking manner, for poor Mrs. Montgomerie's indignation had well nigh made her speechless. "Why should you let his theories trouble or astonish you?"

"Why, Doctor, why?" cried the indignant lady, "not be shocked and astonished, when my own son shamelessly avows such infidel opinions!"

"Infidel opinions! pooh, pooh, my dear lady, take my word for it, your son is a consistent protestant for all that."

"Doctor, I am surprised at you! Do you mean to tell me that you consider a protestant and an infidel as synonymous terms?"

"Not by any means, Mrs. Montgomerie. But what I do mean to say, ma'am, is, that to doubt is the natural privilege of a protestant, the thing to which his boasted right of private

judgment inevitably compels him. Now, this being the case, I really do not see why you should quarrel with Mr. Frank, because he chooses to push his privilege a little farther than you are inclined to do yourself, or why, so long as you consider yourself free to hesitate on one point, (as for instance, the infallibility of the church), you should not give him equal liberty to hesitate on another; as for example, the infallibility of the Sacred volume itself."

"Really Doctor," replied Mrs. Mongomerie, now beginning to feel not merely shocked, but offended. "I knew already that you Romanists cared little for the Bible, yet I never could have dreamed—"

"Bah, my dear friend," the Doctor here peevishly interrupted, "who knows what a woman might not dream? or fancy at any rate, that she had dreamed. Why look ye now; in this very matter of the Sabbath, I say, and will prove it too, that you never with all your care kept a Sabbath in your lifetime according to the ordinance of the Bible."

"Sir!" cried the lady bridling—and while Evelyn upset a cup of tea, in her endeavours to



conceal her amusement, Frank roared outright, and Lily with uplifted hands exclaimed—

“If cold dinners and no letters,—if lots of sermons and no novels constitute the keeping holy of the Sabbath day, then I am certain mama has never missed one since I came to the use of reason.”

“My dear child,” replied the Doctor, simply and gravely, “all these little privations of which you speak, were practised on the *first* day of the week, whereas it is the *last* that the Bible commands us to keep holy.”

“Oh, is that all,” said Mrs. Montgomerie, evidently much relieved. “But then we live in the christian dispensation, Doctor,” and there she paused, very evidently considering that in these words she had presented a full and undeniable solution of the difficulty.

“And how does that alter the case I should like to know?” demanded her antagonist. “To you who accept the Bible as your sole rule of faith, it is no answer; for you will not find the change mentioned in the New Testament, or the Acts, or the epistles of either Peter, John, or

James,—but I forget,—Luther has knocked James on the head long ago, for his preposterous notions about good works.”

“ But if we are anti-scriptural, so are you, Doctor,” cried Mrs. Montgomerie, “ for you keep your Sabbath on the very same day that we do.”

“ Aye, madam. But then the Church to which I belong does not clamour morning, noon, and night, for the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. She attaches also a certain value to tradition, and by tradition and tradition only, pretends to justify the change of which we have been speaking. Now, as you and yours refuse tradition, of course you cannot use it as an argument, and therefore, I repeat, that with all your care and trouble, you never have yet, and moreover, never will keep the Sabbath day correctly until you become either a jewess or a papist.”

Here the Doctor snuffed triumphantly, and Mrs. Montgomerie looked as if she did not know whether to beat him or to cry. Evelyn began to think it was high time to interpose between them.



"It is time to fetch Wyllie," she said rising from the table, "I promised he should stay half an hour with us this evening. So I bind you two over to keep the peace until I return to see fair play between you."

The doctor laughed and offered his snuff box in his most conciliatory manner to Mrs. Montgomerie, and Evelyn feeling sure that the battle was over for the present, left the room in search of her brother.

"Don't you find dear Evelyn looking excessively handsome?" Mrs. Montgomerie immediately demanded, thinking she had hit upon a subject where no possible difference of opinion could be found between them.

Unfortunately the doctor, like many other people, had an instinctive dislike to anything resembling over praise. He could not indeed run Evelyn down, as under similar circumstances he would unscrupulously have done any one else, but he took a long pinch of snuff, and doubtfully replied:

"She is well enough and fair enough, for that

matter; but not half so fair or handsome as her mother."

"Well enough! fair enough!" cried Lily, all her lurking fear of the doctor quite forgotten in astonishment at this very moderate computation of Evelyn's charms. "Why her profile is perfect, and so are her manners. If she were not such a bigot she would be positively delightful."

"My dear young lady" replied the doctor, knitting his eyebrows at her, and yet showing such good natured eyes beneath them, that Lily could no longer fear him, "may I ask for your definition of a bigot?"

"A bigot—a bigot," hesitated Lily, "oh, I'll tell you all about that another time, doctor, for here comes Wyllie and I have promised to sing for him."

"Aye indeed," cried the doctor, who was nearly as fond of music as of argument, "by all means let us have a song."

And off he bustled to open the piano; but Lily loved better to trust to her own sweet notes alone, and as soon as Wyllie was settled comfort-

ably on his sofa, she sat down on a low stool beside him and began :

## LILY'S SONG.

" Stormy water—stormy water,  
What is this thy waves are bringing?  
Stormy water—stormy water,  
To thy wild embraces clinging.

Stormy water—stormy water,  
Golden hair like sea weed twining;  
Stormy water! stormy water,  
On thy treacherous bosom shining!

Stormy water—stormy water—  
Face and feet of dazzling brightness;  
Stormy water—stormy water,  
Like to snow drifts in their whiteness!

Stormy water—stormy water—  
Death upon thy breast has laid her;  
Stormy water—stormy water—  
None may ever more upbraid her.

Stormy water—stormy water—  
Softly smooth her rolling pillow;  
Stormy water—stormy water,  
Bear her gently, foam-crowned billow!

Stormy water—stormy water—  
None may ever weep the maiden!  
Stormy water—stormy water,  
Sin distained and sorrow laden!

Stormy water—stormy water—  
Therefore let thy wild winds o'er her;  
Stormy water—stormy water,  
Sing her requiem and deplore her."

Lily's voice was not very powerful, but it was singularly sweet and touching, and therefore

peculiarly calculated to give their full expression to the mournful cadences of the air she sung, and the strange wild words that had been wedded to their music.

Tears were stealing from Wyllie's half-closed eye-lids long ere the voice of the singer had died away, and Frank flung his book impatiently on the table, saying :

"Why will you sing that song, Lily? It was sad enough even when he was here who wrote it; but now every note seems to say we shall never see him more."

"I don't see why it should say any such thing," pouted Lily; "and it's no reason because you all choose to forget him, that I should do so also, or that I shouldn't sing his song either, when I never had any that I liked as well."

She was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Sutherland from the garden. He was deadly pale, and she saw by the expression of his face that he too had been listening to her song. He did not speak, however, until he had reached the spot where she was sitting; and then grasping her

hand so tightly that she could have screamed for pain, he said aloud :

“ Lily, never you dare to sing that song again in this house ;” after which he strode once more out of the window, without vouchsafing a word or look to any one else.

“ Come ! come !” cried the good-natured doctor, who saw that if Evelyn was silent, she was yet suffering intensely, and that all the rest of the party were more or less ill at ease, “ I won’t have you give my little patient here the blue-devils, Miss Lily. So here goes for an antidote to your salt water-dismals, in the shape of a song which I wrote nearly twenty years ago for some young friends of mine who were getting up the German, and then little known luxury, of a christmas-tree ;” and without further preface, in a good manly voice, the doctor sung :—

“ Oh, the christmas-tree ! the old christmas-tree !  
It is laden with fruit, and fair to see ;  
And we’ll dance around it on christmas night  
With bosoms that bound, and with footsteps light !

See ! lights upon lights on its branches shine ;  
And garlands a thousand around them twine !  
And our friends have each sent a gift to be  
Hung up on the boughs of the christmas-tree !

Nay, pause, dearest children, amid your glee,  
Come here a moment and listen to me,  
While I tell of Him who brings christmas night  
With its merry dance and its tree of light.

He lay upon straw while you garlands twine—  
He was wrapt in rags, while in silks you shine—  
And He came in tears that your dance might be  
All sinless and glad round the christmas-tree.

Oh, give Him a thought as you dance away,  
Your dance will not be for that thought less gay;  
And give for His sake to the poor who came,  
Before kings to bow to the Saviour's name!

And gladder than ever your step will be  
As lightly you bound round the christmas-tree;  
And your hearts be filled with more glorious light  
Than the tapers yield to its branches bright."

## CHAPTER II.

I HAVE seen a maiden's chamber in which you might have stood as within a sanctuary of religious peace. The snowy purity of the hangings, the modest simplicity of the arrangements, but above all the prie-dieu with its crucifix and madonna, every thing bore witness for her of the Spirit that ruled her lonely hours, and of the haven to which her heart was turned the moment it was relieved from the pressure of the world. You felt instinctively that hers was one of those pure spirits that never consider themselves alone, for that she only passed from the visible presence of her fellow mortals to move



yet more consciously in the invisible presence of One, whose demands upon her conscience would be far more searching and exact than theirs; and therefore, that whether in society or alone, the zone of religious modesty would still be about her soul, chastening alike her interior thought,<sup>3</sup> and her exterior actions, until angels themselves might not have blushed to share the one, or be witnesses to the others. Not such a chamber as this was the bower of our fair friend Lily, though it was perhaps even more gracefully and prettily arranged. Books, and flowers, and pictures were scattered lavishly about, but the fair face of the virgin mother was not there to breathe an atmosphere of purity throughout the chamber, nor the crucifix to hallow it with the recollections of Mount Calvary; and the books were books of poetry and romance, destined evidently to kill time rather than to employ it—to fling flowers over the present life, rather than to lay up fruit for that of eternity. Other books there were, alas! less harmless. But these were so arranged as to escape the notice of any casual visitor, for Lily's conscience told her that not

one of all that household, (with the exception of her banished cousin), but would have condemned her for their possession.

Verily, Frank's favourite principles had been turned by his young pupils against himself. He had taught them to eschew all idea of authority in matters of self guidance, and they applied the principle by acting absolutely in contradiction to his own. He had exalted the intellect above every other gift in their estimation, and they saw in this sufficient reason for gratifying the wildest of its cravings after knowledge and excitement. He had tried to limit their conviction to the evidence of the sense, and they, with young ardent spirits still thirsting after that immortal existence which alone can fling glory and sunshine upon this one, they revenged themselves for the hard dry doctrine he thus forced upon them, by plunging into the wildest regions of idealism, and pouring forth their excited feelings in that worship, compounded of nature, beauty, and moral goodness, which the style of literature that occupied their secret hours offered, all too lavishly, to their acceptance.

Alas ! in these ecstasies of the soul, (as they would themselves have termed them), all was theory and nothing practice. Their visions were bright and beautiful, and glowing as the colors of the kaleidoscope, but like these also, the beauty most indispensable, the beauty of design, was wanting to the pattern. Little chance there ever is of such vague prettinesses taking root in positive acts of virtue. The path is followed so long as it is of primrose beauty, but the first opposing briar sends the travellers to another. And so it was with these young spirits, though unused to self examination it was long ere they themselves were conscious of the fact. They thought themselves virtuous, because they loved to talk of virtue, and they talked of virtue long after they had left its paths, to wander in the one which leads to sin. Not that Frank's teaching tended directly to this end, but indirectly, most assuredly it did.

The more immediate cause of their ruin might be found in the literature which their lawless contempt of all authority laid open to their notice. Germany, America, and England, each

supplied a portion of the poisoned stream, until their senses were dazzled and their reason utterly bewildered, amid those glittering sophistries and virtuous vague declamations, which tend to nothing save the exaltation of man as man, and, as a necessary consequence, to the depreciation of God as God. Then came the worst school of French romance to fill up the measure of the evil, and in weeping over the fortunes of the chance Indianna of the volume they were engaged on, they learned, almost unconsciously to themselves, and even while still discoursing eloquently of virtue, to range their admiration and sympathies on the side of vice.

What wonder, therefore, that when, with his natural ideas of right and wrong thus blotted and confused, with his passions just awakened, and without any habit of mental discipline by which to bridle their excesses, Frederick Sutherland went forth young, high spirited, and wealthy, to try the pleasures of the world, he should have become an easy prey to its worst seductions; should have fallen from one abyss of folly to another deeper yet; and even in that last and lowest

in which our story finds him, should still have been able to turn aside the stings of conscience by the pleasant faith with which his reading had supplied him; namely—that the Creator, if there were one, would be too beneficent to punish his creatures for those derelictions from morality to which they had been urged by the human nature wherewith He Himself had clothed them; for that sooner or later, without pain or effort on their part, all should be purified and made regenerate in Him, and the wicked as well as the good be gathered indiscriminately together into the paradise of the blessed.

Not less fatal was the effect of Lily's education on her conduct, though it was less visible at first, for, as almost necessarily must be the case with women, the innocence of her soul was sullied long ere the taint could be discovered in her outward actions. So far, these last were innocent or at least not deeply guilty, but it needed small acquaintance with the course she was pursuing to have prophesied that her very next step would be a plunge into ruin.

And yet so rapidly does evil ripen, that to all

appearance she was still almost a child, and of those around her, Evelyn alone suspected (and even she never dreamed of the magnitude of the danger), that Lily's childish love for Frederick was rapidly assuming a form inimical to her future peace. Alas, there was already a canker in the rosebud! And a very rosebud indeed she looked one summer evening, as she sat at her open window, with her bright hair falling around her, her small hands clasped together, and leaning on the sill, and her large, restless eyes, so like the restless eyes of infancy, roaming anxiously over the pleasure grounds beneath.

Once or twice she rose as if impatient of delay, and put her head cautiously out of the window, but nothing could she see there, save the gloomy clumps of evergreens on the lawn, their upper leaves now glistening in the moonshine, while their long shadows looking inky black by contrast, fell darkly on the turf.

Not a sound stirred the air, not a breeze sighed among the laurels, and the very perfume of the flowers seemed to come heavily upwards, as if it had scarcely found wherewithal below to waft



it on its way. Lily thought she had never known a night so still before. Too still it was indeed for the passions that stirred her breast, and the purpose that chained her to the window. The calmness of nature seemed not only like a reproach to her for the tumultuous throbbings of her heart, but gave her time and opportunity also, for the still small voice of conscience to upbraid her. She never willingly listened to that voice, so she longed for the song of a nightingale, for the ripple of a stream, for anything in short, to break the spell that was creeping over her, and dissipate the sense of responsibility that for the first time in her life perhaps, was asserting itself in her soul.

“Twelve o’clock,” she muttered to herself, as the clock of a distant church tolled out the hour; “surely he cannot have forgotten, or perhaps he is only fearful of being seen.”

And then in a soft *mezza voce* she began to sing :

“Lo, softly now the moon is shining,  
O’er mountain dark and silvery sea,  
And hark ! the nightingale is twining,  
Its sweetest notes in songs to thee.  
Thee, lady—thee !



Lily paused for a moment on the burthen of her song, as if she expected it would have been repeated from below; but as no sound met her ear, she proceeded to the second stanza:

“For thee do roses shed their bloom,  
And from their lone and distant lea,  
Young violets with their breath perfume  
The still night air that visits thee!  
Thee, lady—thee!”

Again the singer stopped to listen, thinking she really had distinguished something like a faint echo of the last line, in the direction of the laurels; and it was with a heightened color and very perceptible smile of triumph that she again took up the song:—

“Sweet sovereign thou, of beauty art!  
Ah, let thy rule in mercy be,  
And pardon this too daring heart  
That breathes perforce its vows to thee,  
Thee, lady—thee!”

This time, at any rate, there could be no doubt! Not only was Lily accompanied throughout the whole of the stanza by a rich but subdued voice from below; but by the dexterous

substitution of the word 'only' for 'lady' in the burthen of the song, the invisible performer had given double force to the declaration it contained, and sent a thrill of gratified vanity to the heart of its fair object.

"It is he!" she murmured, starting to her feet, and once more straining her eyes in the direction of the evergreens. "The third time is the charm then; but I wish he would give some sign, for I am afraid to go down without having seen him first. No need to be so cautious now that Evelyn is at Southampton."

Even as the thought passed through her mind, something moving cautiously among the laurels caught her eye, and directly afterwards a hat was raised so as to be visible for a moment above some of the lower branches. It was the preconcerted signal; and satisfied that Frederick was below, she blew out the candle, took a small parcel from the table, and stepped forth (as she thought for the last time probably) over the threshold of her chamber. The library, with its windows opening on the lawn was directly beneath it, and hither she addressed her footsteps.

At that late hour, of course, the windows were closed, and the shutters bolted. It was no more than Lily had expected, and was prepared for; yet there was such a lurking consciousness of guilt about her that, for a second, she felt as frightened as if it had been done on purpose. With a beating heart she set the little lamp she carried, on the table, and drawing a chair towards the window, applied herself to the removing of the shutters. They were fastened by a heavy iron bar, but of late she had been only too well used to lift it, and with a few dexterous movements it was laid quietly on the floor. A moment's pause was all she needed then to assure herself, that the house was still as quiet as night and sleep could make it; and this important fact once ascertained, she stepped out through the window on the turf beyond. That night set a black seal on Lily's future destiny! Not that there was any positive will for evil in her heart, as she thus recklessly tempted danger; but neither was there any positive resolution to avoid it. In this, as in all things else, she acted vaguely, simply following the impulse of the hour, with-

out ever questioning herself as to its ultimate influence on her conduct.

Thus while a movement of love and pity urged her to follow the fortunes of her *roué* cousin, there were no fixed principles by which to guide such sentiments aright; no keen pangs of conscience to warn her against their undue indulgence; no sufficient strength of purpose to make her say to herself and them—"thus far shall you go—no further."

Never, in fact, was that strong purpose farther from Lily's mind than at the moment when she most required it. Alone in her room up-stairs—conscience had dimly disturbed her quiet; but now, with Frederick's voice yet ringing in her ears, and Frederick himself but three yards from her, her only thought was how to reach him, her only fear lest Frank might be keeping one of his late vigils, or her ever timid, ever watchful mother be roused by the sound of her footfall, light as it was, and discover her from the window.

Fortune, however, or what she thought fortune, favoured her again. The broad gravel

walk with its bright bit of moonshine, was passed over safely, and under the shadow of the trees beyond, she was once more received, eager and trembling, into her cousin's arms

"Dear, dear Frederick," she murmured almost convulsively "Oh, Frederick, I have lived an age since I got that last dear scrap of paper which told me you would be here to-night."

"Hush, Lily, for Heaven's sake speak lower," he replied, and in the midst of all his love there was impatience both in voice and manner as he led her out of sight of the house to a seat beneath a spreading beech tree.

"There is no one there," said Lily, "even Frank has put out his light and buried his book 'certain fathoms deep' in slumber, for I looked up at his window as I came along."

"Aye, *they* are all asleep, perhaps," replied the other jerking his finger in the direction of the Ferns to indicate the persons of whom he spoke. "But who knows if others are not more wakeful? or can you tell me, Lily, what yonder clump of hawthorn may contain, or whether eyes and ears may not be prying on us from

behind that paling, with its impenetrable drapery of roses?"

"Don't, Frederick, don't," whispered Lily, creeping closer to him as she spoke. "How can you frighten me? Surely, surely, your father is the only person that you need to fear; no one else can hinder or distress you?"

"I wish I were as sure of that as you are," replied her cousin, biting his fingers with an air of moody abstraction; "but unluckily it is not the truth; for look ye, Lily, I don't say that I would rather meet my father face to face, but humanly speaking it would be better ten thousand times to do so, than to fall in with some other of the sneaking scoundrels that may be on the look out for me this moment."

"Oh, then, why not come back to my uncle this very instant?" cried the frightened Lily; "he might be proud and all that, just at first; but he would forgive you in the end, I know, for there is no one that he really loves but you, and at any rate he would protect you;—you would be safe with him."

"Safe!" Frederick echoed her words in bitter

mockery. "Safe, Lily! Is there a house in England where a man is safe from the clutches of the law?"

"The law! But oh, Frederick, what has the law to say to you? You cannot have done anything against the law?"

"Perhaps not," he answered through his closed teeth, and in such a way that his manner was a direct contradiction to his words. "Perhaps not. But, Lily, even if it were so, do you not know that I have broken irrevocably with my father?"

"No, indeed, Frederick, you never told me so. But when?"

"About two months ago. He sent me a fairish enough offer of reconciliation, and I refused it."

"Alas, Frederick, how could you do so?"

"Because I am in the power of those who will peach upon me the instant they suspect me of trying to shake them off, Lily. In a cursed moment, and when pressed hard for money, I went shares in one of their d——d transactions, and ever since I am their slave, to travel hither and thither wherever they please."



“Nasty, cruel, hard-hearted things!” said Lily indignantly; “and now it is all over, Frederick, for I am sure my uncle will never unbend again.”

“Never!” said Frederick, in a strange sepulchral tone, “and therefore it is, Lily,” he added softly, “that, as I hinted in my note to-day, the time is come at last when hesitation can no more avail you—we must part to-night for ever, or you, sweet love, must make up your mind at last, to follow wherever my vagrant fortunes lead me.”

Lily had known all along that this was coming; yet now it almost seemed to take her by surprise, so momentous was the decision that she was called upon to make.

“To follow your fortunes; and oh, Frederick,” she faltered, with some little of that involuntary misgiving which the character of her cousin would naturally inspire; “will you love me always; and shall I always be your little wife indeed, as you used to call me in our days of childhood?”

“My little wife or anything else you please,”

said he carelessly, and drawing her yet closer to him by the arm which was round her waist. "So long as you always look upon me with those blue eyes as you are looking now, so long, my Lily, must I always love you; and I care not one straw by what name you call the tie that will bind us to each other."

Strange thoughts and fears without a name, began to crowd thickly upon Lily's mind—yet a natural reluctance prevented her from avowing even to herself the nature of her anxieties, though in hopes of finding a clue to his real meaning she ventured at last to say,—

"But I am afraid Frank will be angry, he is so very particular—and Evelyn also."

Frederick laughed, such a laugh! Even on the ear of the inexperienced girl it grated harshly—but as he made no other answer, she proceeded a little further.

"Might I not consult them about it? Evelyn, at any rate. She would not be hard upon me when it comes to the point I am certain."

"No! Lily, no!" Frederick here broke in abruptly, and decidedly; "I will have no con-

fidences, or confidants in my affairs. If you like Frank—stay with Frank. If you like me—come with me. But once, and for ever, you must choose between us.”

“Frederick! Frederick! You know that I love you best of any; you know that I can have no other choice,” sobbed Lily, unused to the harshness of her lover’s manner.

“Then why does my little Lily talk such nonsense?” said her relenting cousin. “What is Frank, or even Evelyn to me, that my affairs should be made common talk among them?”

“But, Frederick, one word more—when—when?”

“To-morrow night,” he answered promptly, seeing she was vainly struggling to put her thought in words, and mistaking or choosing to mistake the nature of that thought. “The city is getting too hot to hold me just at present; and I am going westwards. Therefore, Lily, it must be to-morrow! All things shall be in readiness for our flight, and I will meet you here at the usual hour.”

"I shall be quite ready, Frederick! But it was not exactly about that I meant to ask. It was about the marriage you know. How will that be managed? We shall be married directly, shan't we?"

"To be sure," said Frederick, coldly, "if you wish it, Lily; and if you really think that a man in sleeves and surplice, or a vulgar registrar clipping the Queen's English can add to the security of such a love as ours,—married as we shall be already in our own eyes, and the eyes of Heaven."

"Heaven," repeated Lily, wounded by the indifference with which he spoke; yet since he had promised all she asked, hardly knowing in what manner to resent it. "Do you really think there is a Heaven, Frederick, and that there be those in Heaven who look down upon us here?"

"A Heaven? And wherefore not, dear Lily?" he answered; glad of anything that changed the subject. "Wherefore not, for such as you?" he went on tenderly. "Surely if in this wide, universe creation there be an appointed place for all

things beautiful and good, there must be high above yon galaxy of stars, a bright, abiding home for YOU, the best and most beautiful of any ! ”

“ But where really is that resting place, dear Frederick, and in what do its joys consist ? ”

“ Nay, trouble not yourself to ask the question, dearest. Travellers need not to enquire the nature of the country towards which they very certainly are tending. It would be but idle waste of time to do so ! Therefore, while we repose in the arms of our beautiful mother-nature here, we may well afford to wait in patience that appointed hour when the great mystery of the future shall unveil itself to our wondering vision.”

“ Then if there be a Heaven, Frederick, do you think it follows (and all unconsciously, Lily lowered her voice as she asked the question), do you think it follows that there is a hell for punishment likewise ? ”

“ I thought my Lily could better and more largely estimate the mercy and beneficence of that universal Providence which legislates for all creatures, than even to have asked the question ; ”

Frederick answered in a voice of subdued reproach.

"But if it *were* true," persisted Lily, "and if that Providence (whatever it is) *did* punish us hereafter for doing wrong here; oh, Frederick, how terrible it would be!"

"But, Lily, it cannot be true, I say; it would be an infinite injustice to the sublime goodness that rules the universe, scattering abroad with a lavish hand, light and glory, beauty, freshness and perfume, for the enjoyment of his creatures; it would be an infinite injustice, I say, to suppose even for a moment, that he could under any circumstances whatever, have contemplated plunging those creatures into an abyss of torments."

"Oh, it is dreadful, dreadful only to think of it," murmured Lily clasping her hands, and leaning her head for a moment upon her cousin's shoulder; "and if there be a God, dear Frederick, He would be a cruel God indeed, could He thus fearfully avenge Himself upon His creatures."

"And all for what?" continued Frederick in his softest and most persuasive manner; "He made

the violet for the delectation of your senses, and He would plunge you, forsooth, into eternal fire (the bigots say), only for some small condescension to those very faculties, for which He in the halls of His eternal love has already so industriously and so minutely catered."

"Then you do not believe in the punishment of sin at all?" the wavering girl questioned anxiously.

"No more than I do in the existence of that sin itself," replied her lover. "Pshaw, Lily! according to the old philosophy, evil itself is good in the making; and if carrion in sunshine will convert itself into flowers, wherefore I pray you may not man, whether on a gibbet or in jail, be still on his way to the good and true? I know not indeed how such a purification will be brought about, but of this, at least I feel quite certain, that the largest must ever be the truest sentiment. Therefore there is less of the generous spirit of truth in your christian men and women, doling out eternal reward and punishment according to their small notions of right and wrong, than in the sentiment of the Indian vishnu; 'I



am the same to all mankind and there is not one worthy of my love or hatred.' ”

“ Which is as much as to say,” commented Lily, “ that He cares not for the little deeds we do in this little life of ours. And indeed that idea seems most consistent with His greatness, for with the universe to harmonize and govern, what can it be to Him, how each small atom of that universe employs its brief hour of existence.”

“ Aye,” responded Frederick, “ and even were it true, (which I do not believe), that He has appointed laws and forbidden them to be broken; still would I most emphatically deny that such a diabolical invention as a place of eternal misery could have been included in his scheme of retribution; and still would I maintain that it is an insult to the eternal Trinity of truth, beauty, and goodness embodied in our idea of Him, only to suggest it.”

“ Ah,” said Lily at last half convinced, and sighing a long sigh of relief from mental pressure. “ I can believe, or at least I can think I believe, in heaven, since it gives the last note of

harmony wanting to our being; but my soul utterly abhors and rejects the idea of hell which would dim the beauty of the eternal vision, and degrade Him from a bright dream of love and goodness, into a phantom of revenge and hatred."

"Most certainly would it," Frederick a little impatiently replied; "but after all, why waste the precious moments in discussing such far off things as these, dear Lily? Surely our hearts have many a sweeter theme to discourse upon to each other."

"Forgive me, dear Frederick, I hardly know why I named the subject at all," Lily faltered, half feeling that she was speaking falsely and yet not quite certain. She did not herself altogether understand the sentiments that were stirring in her bosom, and therefore never thoroughly grasped the fact, that in trying to assure herself of her own irresponsibility to a higher power, she was merely endeavouring to impose silence on the still small voice within, which whispered that under any circumstances whatsoever, her elopement must be a fault. Some-

thing even in Frederick's words and manner yet more painfully suggested that were he not merciful as she was weak, that fault a little later might be terribly developed into crime.

"Then think no more about it, dearest," Frederick replied, with passionate and enthusiastic affection in his looks and tones; "think no more about it, but promise, my beautiful, my adored, that you will be mine—mine own—bravely and heroically—heedless of the bigot blame of others, untrammelled by the traditions of a worn out age, invented for the management of children. Believe me, nothing less than such high trust will assure me of the intensity of your love, for nothing less will satisfy the immensity of my own."

"And you at least will never blame me?" Lily faltered in one last lingering expression of the doubt that filled her soul.

"Blame you!" he enthusiastically exclaimed, "when by such noble independence you will have lifted yourself to my idea of the sublime! Blame you indeed! Remember what a great man has said; that self trust is the essence of

heroism; and believe (for you may) that you never are so true to the noble instinct which nature has implanted within your breast as when you most thoroughly put in practice the great stoical maxim, which tells you to obey yourself."

"Then by this token I promise, Frederick," replied Lily, putting a ring upon his finger, "I promise to be here to-morrow night."

Frederick only answered by a passionate embrace, and then the lovers parted. He to return to the evil men who had used his theories to guide him to his ruin, she to dream once more, and perhaps for the last time, of some enchanted island where, amid never-failing summer airs and never fading flowers, she might fulfil her dream of perfect joy, with Frederick worshipping at her feet for ever.

## CHAPTER III.

"I SAY, Miss Evelyn," said Dr. Spencer, as he sat with her one evening drinking coffee in his garden, close by the low clematis-covered wall that separated it from Southampton common, "did you ever refuse to marry Frank Montgomerie?"

"Did Frank Montgomerie ever propose for Evelyn de Burghe? ought perhaps to have been the question first in order," said the lady laughing, and scarcely even colouring beneath the glance of the keen eye fixed scrutinisingly upon her.

"Pshaw, child, don't tell me. Of course he

did. Do you think I am such a ninny as to believe that he has been living ten years under the same roof with such a pretty creature as you are without popping the question? Why I'd have done it in half the time when I was his age."

"But you are an Irishman, sir, whereas Frank is a cold-blooded Saxon."

"Well, that does make a difference certainly," resumed the doctor; "but even rating your influence over him at half the power it would have exercised over me, it has been at work in his case for double the number of years that would have been required in mine; and therefore ought by this time to make up in quantity for what is wanting in quality."

"Ten years in all ordinary cases would have gone far towards annihilating the sentiment altogether," retorted the smiling Evelyn.

"In all ordinary cases, yes," replied the other; "but in extraordinary cases, no! Now this is an extraordinary case, I say, for you are an extraordinary woman, he is an extraordinary man—ergo, according to my theory he must have

fallen desperately in love with you, and if he did so, just as undoubtedly has made you acquainted with the fact."

Miss De Burghe coloured a little and did not reply. Possibly Frank Montgomerie was not in her thoughts at all that moment, nor did the doctor himself feel quite certain that he was, therefore he urged her yet more closely.

"You are hesitating, Miss Evelyn. Come! come! make a clean breast of it at once, and confess that he did propose for you, and you refused him."

"No, indeed, sir, I can confess no such a thing; for in fact he never did propose for me, and, therefore, as a matter of course, I did not refuse him."

"Humph! are you quite sure it was not that fellow in India that made you so unkind to Frank!"

"But I never was unkind to him, I tell you," said Evelyn, the blood rushing tumultuously to her temples, and then as suddenly retreating; symptoms by no means lost on the keen observation of her tormentor, "and besides, sir, you



may be overheard—any one passing outside that wall can hear every word you say.”

“If they thought it worth while to listen, my dear,” replied the Doctor, “which is not very likely at this time of evening, and with the Southampton fair in full vigour below. But to return to what I was saying. I never will believe that Frank has not been singed by your charms. He is a very cool-headed fellow, I know, but I should hate him if I thought him so cool-headed as that.”

“Or cool-hearted,” amended Evelyn. “But really, sir, I think you are rather hard upon Frank—for love they say needs sympathy, and ever since I can remember, we have always been (joke or earnest) antagonists to each other.”

“A much better material for true love than sympathy and all that sort of trash,” replied the Doctor. “Lovers have always been antagonistic to each other, from Benedict and Beatrice downward.”

“But Benedict and Beatrice did sympathise on one point,” urged Evelyn. “They agreed in

abusing matrimony, whereas there is not a point of union between Frank and me!"

"You *must* have snubbed him," reiterated the Doctor, in his most obstinate manner. "There is no other way of accounting for it, unless he had a previous attachment?"

"That I am sure he had not, sir. In fact, his mind has always been too much taken up with grave matters to think—"

"Of treading the primrose path of love," interrupted the Doctor. "Well, on the whole I am rather glad of it than otherwise, for though he *is* a noble fellow, you would have fought like cat and dog, if once you had been fairly buckled together."

"Should we, sir? And why?"

"Because, as you say, you are antagonistic to each other on every point."

"But I thought you considered discord the proper element to begin with."

"Aye, but not to end with! For do you see, Miss Evelyn, though April showers may bring forth May flowers, they are not so well suited to ripen the fruits of August; and just upon the

same principle, while a little gentle tilting may be a very good means to make young love blossom, still it never would do to carry that practice into matrimony. Either man or woman must knock under *then*, if there's to be peace between them, and I don't know how in wedded life they are to get on without it."

"Nor I either, I am sure," said Evelyn. "Therefore, you see it is quite as well that Frank and I never came to closer quarters, since we are much too strong in our several creeds for either of us to be willing to knock under, as you call it."

"Don't dignify Frank's loose notions with the appellation of a creed," cried the doctor impatiently. "A creed is a profession of faith in something; whereas he only professes to have faith in nothing."

"He believes that he doesn't believe," said Evelyn smiling sadly; "that is a kind of creed, isn't it, sir?"

"No, it isn't," said the doctor shortly; "it is a simple exertion of intellectual pride. Moreover, it isn't true in his case; for whatever

he may choose to say upon the subject, Frank has a soul too noble far ever to be able thoroughly to carry out such materialist opinions to their just conclusions."

"What then, has he faith in, sir?" Evelyn asked incredulously; "for I am certain there is nothing that he does not deny."

"Except love of truth and virtue, Evelyn. He believes in these things because they are in him, and he knows well they are. You smile; but I tell you, his is eminently a truth loving spirit, and what is more, he has great natural virtue too—the virtue that inclines to good, though without the grace of God it can never be a sure preventive of evil—"

"And therefore?" questioned Evelyn with considerable interest.

"And therefore," pursued the doctor, "even while denying it—and certainly without being conscious of it, he has faith in something higher still, because, (can't you understand, Miss Evelyn), vice and virtue, as such, cannot exist without the law that makes them. But a law implies the existence of a law giver; therefore if Frank be-

lieves in virtue, he must believe, though he may not think it, both in the law that constitutes the virtue, and the Being that makes the law."

"I think he would fall back upon the natural structure of the brain prompting a man in various proportions to good and evil," said Evelyn, recollecting a recent conversation at the 'Ferns.'

"He would fall back upon nonsense then, and break the back of his argument altogether." the doctor testily retorted. "Why, the wickedest brain that ever was hatched by Dame Nature (and to do her justice, she is mighty ingenious in such matters) possesses a consciousness of good and evil, which is altogether independent of, and superior to the action to which that brain is prompting. A man may be urged, indeed, by the accident of his constitution with greater force towards good or evil: but still his conscience will be over all to warn him and rebuke, and I should like Master Frank or any of his clique to tell me, what is this conscience, and whence it comes? Neither of nature nor from her certainly, since it is generally opposed to, and frequently

overrules her. Surely this one fact alone might teach us, that we are not mere animal compounds of flesh and blood and instinct only, but that we possess a something higher than all these within us, something which acknowledges to the existence, and holds itself amenable to the laws of a Supreme Creator—”

“It ought I am sure,” said Evelyn with a sigh; “but yet I am very certain that it does not.”

“Because they must have logical proof forsooth,” replied the doctor, “or they will not be-  
4; if God would be God if he could be explained and defined like a mathematical proposition! And mark the consequence,” he continued, striking his cane upon the ground as vigourously as if Evelyn were opposing his opinions; “mark the strange perversity of feeling which grows out of this haughty incredulity. They refuse to acknowledge the existence of a God creator, because His very immensity puts Him beyond the reach of their limited human reason; and by that proud denial are they forced to the stranger humility of cutting themselves off from all the high and stirring promises of im-

mortality which such a faith presents them, and of reducing themselves to a level with the brute creation, whose only possession is of this life and whose only hope is in it. But hang it, we have had enough of this folly," he cried, rising and pushing his chair impatiently away, "what do you say to giving Master Wyllie a sight of the fair instead?"

"My dear sir," she rather anxiously enquired, "are you not afraid the heat and excitement will be too much for him?"

"Perfect repose of mind and body, an atmosphere redolent of attar of roses and of India; opium and henbane to give him sleep, and chicken panada to keep him puny," replied the doctor, putting his hands behind his back, and training his words to a lisping accent; "that is what them London fellows would say to you, Miss Evelyn; but *I* say," he continued, changing his manner, and rather enhancing than diminishing his natural allowance of the brogue, "cease to coddle the boy in the name of heaven; try to make him forget that he has been reared in a hot house; withdraw his mind as much as possible



from himself by exercise and amusement; and give him as much of the former as you can induce him to take, and as much of the latter as will make it pleasant to take it. I don't say, my dear young lady," he went on kindly, for the tears were standing in Evelyn's eyes; "I don't at all mean to say that poor Wyllie is not a very suffering child, and that he does not demand great care. But I do say, that such care to be useful, must be judicious, and that his sufferings are precisely of that kind which may be irrevocably established in the system by unwise tenderness; while a more hardy mode of treatment may, and I have little doubt will, eradicate them altogether. Now can you not trust me, Evelyn?"

"I should be ungrateful indeed if I did not," Evelyn answered smiling through her tears.

"But can't you say you do though?" persisted the doctor impatiently. "I hate all those civil speeches about ungrateful and so forth. Nine times out of ten they are nothing on earth but polite negations."

"Mine was not at all events; for it came straight from the heart," said Evelyn. "But if

you like it better I will say that I do trust you, and with a heart and a half, moreover, as our country folks have it. Does that content you, doctor?"

"Yes, yes," replied the mollified doctor, shaking the hand heartily which Evelyn put into his; "that is brave speaking, and no mistake. And now for Wyllie. Denis can draw his chair, for even I would not recommend his trying to walk. Here, Denis, you idle dog. Denis, I say!"

"Here, sir," cried the individual in question, suddenly emerging from behind a clump of lilacs where he and Wyllie had been amicably seated together.

He was a tall, weather beaten looking man, from whose carriage long years of military service had not been able entirely to eradicate the air of inertness consequent upon the natural indolence of his disposition. He was an Irishman, of course, and united to his master by such an instinct of affectionate fidelity as the commercial feelings of the nineteenth century have almost expunged from the relation of servant and superior. His fortunes and those of his master were

in his mind irrevocably bound up together, and so they had been, ever since the day when he, a tenant's son, had been appointed to follow Dr. Spencer, the youngest then of a family of seven, through the world, and to share in more lowly fashion in whatever good things could be extracted from it.

The common idea, therefore, of the present day, by which servants are continually tempted to quit the service they are actually engaged in, in hopes of bettering their fortunes, as they call it, in another, never could have occurred to Denis; for it never even could have entered into his head to imagine, that he should at any time ever be thrown upon those fortunes for support; or, indeed, that "the master" could manage to keep his own afloat, without aid from the superior wisdom of the servant. Master and man they loved each other heartily, albeit with no such effeminate affection as either excluded quarrels, or expired in them. The one was idle the other was testy, and frequent were the altercations induced by these constitutional defects; innumerable the warnings which they mutually

administered to each other, in the desperate determination of relenting no more. An hour or two of stately solitude in the drawing room was, however, generally speaking, more than sufficient to bring "the masther to his sinses," and no sooner had this favorable change taken place, than the bell was rung; some trifling order, framed with particular care to avoid all reference to the original cause of quarrel, given, and Denis retired, triumphant and chuckling, to his pantry, where he usually observed to the boy who acted as his sub, "that the masther was of the raale good ould blood of Ireland, that never bore malice and was all the better natured for a bit of a row."

Such a system was not likely to mend any man's habits as a servant, and when the doctor having partly inherited, partly acquired a sufficient fortune to enable him to abandon his profession, settled finally at Southampton, Denis grew, if possible, more indolent than before. That is to say he left the house to the care of the woman, the stables to that of the boy, and spent his own time chiefly in the garden, which he chose as the scene of his

peculiar labours, varied, however, and made lighter by an almost daily saunter on the common, or a walk by the say-side, his mode of designating the muddy banks of the Southampton waters. Fortunately he was as good-natured as he was indolent, or even more so; and having taken a great fancy to Wyllie, worked harder in carrying salt water for his baths than he had ever been known to work for years before; was not only always ready and willing to carry him in and out, and to wheel him for longer excursions in his chair; but spent most of the time he could steal from these occupations in fashioning boats of various sizes, which he and the invalid afterwards amused themselves sailing on the smooth waters of the river.

“Here, sir,” he repeated, walking, in answer to his master’s not over-patient summons, straight up the doctor, and then suddenly halting and standing at ease.

“Oh, you are there, are you?” cried the doctor wrathfully; “and pray where have you been all the afternoon, you idle rascal, that you left Susan to bring in our coffee?”

“Deed then, sir, I have been the best part of three hours drawing wather for master Wyllie’s bath. It takes a power of wather to fill it, and when the tide’s down, it’s a good three quarters of-a-mile through the shallows to fetch it.”

“You are a lying rascal,” replied the master. “The tide was in at three o’clock this afternoon, and you could have drawn the whole river in an hour if you had put your heart as well as your lazy shoulders to the job.”

“An hour!” cried Denis, lifting his hands and eyes in unutterable astonishment to Heaven. “May I never sin, docthor, if it isn’t an hour’s walk to the say-side itself, let alone the drawin of the wather afterwards, which makes it a good two and a half besides.”

“Don’t you answer me, sir. I say you could have done the whole thing in an hour if you had worked with a will. But I see how it is, you rascal! Your hair is all wet, and so I suppose you’ve been rolling like a great porpoise in the ‘say’ as you call it, while the horses were whinnying in the stables for their oats.”

“Well, and if I did take a bit of a swim,” re-

plied the unabashed Denis, carelessly brushing up the lank locks that had betrayed him; "where's the harum I wonder. Your honor is a pheesician, and must know for sartin that there's nothin' in this woredl like salt wather for presarving the complexion."

"Preserving the complexion!" shouted his master. "Why you ugly, brown, ox-hided creature; do you dare to tell me you have got a complexion to keep. Heaven and earth! who ever heard of a creature with the skin of a buffaloe talking of his complexion?"

"Ah, then, and why wouldn't I, docthor? Haven't the very naygurs themselves got a complexion, only it's a mighty dark one entirely; and why not an Irishman, and a Milesian to boot, as glory be to God the o' Daly's are, and ever war, long before Sthrongbow and his English spalpeens set foot in the land—worse luck to the day whon they ventured that same?"

This was meant for, and, indeed, it proved a hard hit at his master, whose paternal ancestors had gone over to Ireland in the train of Strongbow, but who nevertheless was always inclined



to sink his Saxon origin in the Milesian blood with which it had in process of time been blended. It was a weakness of the doctor's, and Denis knew it so well that he never applied the match without stepping a little on one side to avoid the explosion that was sure to follow. On the present occasion he took refuge by the side of Evelyn, just in time apparently to avoid the cane which the doctor shook at him, angrily exclaiming, at the same time:

“I tell you what, you rascal—Strongbow and his spalpeens, as you have the impudence to call them, found club-law an uncommon good settler of your confounded Milesian notions, and I've more than half a mind to try if it can't be made quite as efficient in the hands of one of their descendants.”

“Nay, sir,” cried Evelyn, catching the cane before it could reach the tall sun-flower in the neighbourhood of Denis, upon which it was about vigorously to descend; “you mustn't quite kill Denis until he has given me his receipt for the complexion. Ladies are curious in such matters, you know, although I confess I have

hitherto been shamefully deficient in the science."

"Why, then, Miss, if you ask *my* opinion," replied Denis, with a share of additional importance at being so appealed to, visible in his manner; "I know nothin' better, as I said before, nor salt wather, barrin it be butter-milk, and that you won't get here for love or money, for the rayson I'm towld that they give it to their pigs. And a sin, and a burning shame it is more betoken to throw the licker that would make an Irish boy's heart ring for joy, to a set of lazy, gruntin craythures that pitaty-palins would be much too good for, since they don't pay the rint here as they do in their own counthry."

"It seems like an extravagance, certainly," laughed Evelyn. "But, Denis, you haven't told me yet how to apply the water. Is it as a poultice or wash? or, how is it?"

"A powltice!" repeated Denis. "God help you, Miss, is it in airnest you are? Troth, and if you war to wrap up your purty faytures in sich a powltice as that, it's little enough skin

you'd find on them next mornin. And jist for that same rayson I wouldn't recomind it to you in the way of a wash, but only jist to swally a little of the wather interiorally every mornin."

"To swally the water interiorally; more wholesome than pleasant, I trow" growled the Doctor, but Evelyn only laughed; and encouraged by her smiles, Dennis went on with an air of offended dignity directed against the "master," for venturing to dispute the merit of his prescription.

"To swally it interiorally—that's just it Miss Evelyn. Sure I knew a boy once, who was mighty unaisy about his complexion, because of a young girril he was sweet on, and d— be from me, if he didn't swally a quart of the wather every blessed day of his life till the one that he—"

"Was married on, I suppose," Evelyn could not refrain from interrupting.

"The day that he died, I was goin to obsarve, if you'd waited a minute, Miss," Denis answered gravely, and without moving a muscle of his countenance.

"Small blame to him," cried the Doctor. "A

quart of salt water! Why, man alive, a horse would have kicked the bucket over half that allowance."

"May be," said Denis, doubtfully. "Howsomedevery, although horses are sensible enough bastes in the long run, I've seen them kick before now, at what was intended for their good, all as one as if they'd been christians and didn't know better."

"But the boy who was so particular about his complexion," asked Evelyn. "Did he die of love, Denis, or of salt water, which?"

"Ough, myself doesn't well know what he died of," replied Denis, scratching his head with an air of considerable perplexity. "Some said it was the blue cholera, and some said it was the salt wather,—whatever it was, howsomdevery, it kilt him entirely, and may I never sin, if the girleen he was so fond of didn't strike up a coortship with one of his cousins on the very day of the burial, and the two war buckled together before the month's mind was over. Devil a lie in it, Miss Evelyn, for as quare as it sounds."

"And so much for love and salt wather," said

Evelyn laughing, "I don't feel quite sure that I will try your receipt after all, Denis."

"Ah, and why would you then, Miss?" returned Denis politely, "sure isn't your complexion for all the world like strawberries and crame already, and what for would you be worrying yourself to improve it? Now if it war the masther there, there might be some sinse in the notion, for he was done yallow many a long day ago, in furrin parts. Ingee is a terrible place for the complexion, Miss. I'm dark enough myself in all conscience, since I lived in it, but the masther's face bates banegher in regard to the colour of it altogether; surely it do."

"Lookee here, my fine fellow," roared the doctor, now breaking in as it were by main force upon his servant's volubility; "I promise you, you shall be done brown in ten minutes, and no mistake, if you don't look sharp. There's the bay mare been standing ungroomed in her stall these two hours I'll be sworn, while you have been trying to wash the blackamore white in the Southampton waters."

"'Deed, sir, but you are all out there now,"

Denis answered composedly; "for I towld the boy to do it I did, jist to see if I couldn't insinse him a little into his business."

"Hold your tongue, sir, or I'll discharge you on the spot. Idle, good-for-nothing rascal that you are!"

"Oh, bedad, and bedad, and if I am then, I wonder who made me so," retorted the unabashed Denis; "why now, Miss," he continued, appealing to Evelyn, "I give you my honour, what with fishin', what with shootin', what with drivin' afther elephants, and tigers, and sarpints, and what not, when we war together in Ingee, the masther has spiled me entirely for anything else. Sorra taste of raal work I've ever been able to put my hand to since, with anything like aise and comfort to myself."

"Confound your impudence," said the doctor, turning on his heel, and smiling in spite of himself. "Here, Mr. Idleman, put your shoulder to Master Wyllie's chair, and see if your strength will enable you to wheel him to the common. We are going to give him a peep at the humours of the fair."

## CHAPTER IV.

THE fair with its business and bustle, its merri-  
ment and amusements had nearly reached its  
climax of noise and gaiety; and bells were ring-  
ing, punch was shrilly squealing, merry-go-rounds  
were in full swing, and fifes and drums were  
making medley music over all, by the time the  
Doctor and his companions arrived upon the  
scene. There were tents for music and dancing in  
every direction, and booths also for more useful  
traffic; while stalls tricked out in all such arti-  
cles of spurious jewellery and dress as might  
tempt simple country folk to purchase, were  
lighted up until they glittered like glow-worms,  
amid the dark masses of the moving crowd.



Among these various appliances for business and pleasure the Doctor led them, in and out, here and there; threading his way so as to obtain a glimpse of all the most striking characteristics of the fair. Now pausing, to Wyllie's great delight, to let him listen for a few minutes to the witticisms of Punch; anon to allow his contemplating at his leisure the picture of a gaudily attired Romeo with Juliet in his arms, which graced the entrance to a temporary theatre, on wheels; and, finally, to point out to him the effigy of the "Fat Lady," which from the canvass covering of her tent, announced very intelligibly to the public, that the original of that pleasant portrait was exhibiting within.

They were still engaged in laughing speculations as to her probable resemblance in color and proportions to the brodignag picture before their eyes, when a girl stepped forth from a little knot of dark brown gipsies who had been gradually drawing near them, in hopes of being permitted to tell the fortunes of the bright-eyed Evelyn and her sickly looking brother.

"Won't you have the pretty lady's fortun

told, sir?" she asked, addressing the Doctor. "Only cross my hand with silver, and I'll tell her all about the handsome lord that's awaitin for her somewhere, with gold enough in his two pockets to make her glitter in diamonds as bright as her eyes are."

"My eyes, what a prophet you be!" cried a man who evidently belonged to a rival party. "Don't you see as the lady has had her fortune told out already, and that if the ring ain't on her finger this minute, it's bespoken, at all events for to-morrow morning at latest." And he jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the Doctor, in such a way as to convey his impression to the crowd, that the individual thus indicated was betrothed at the very least, to Evelyn, if he had not the honor of being actually her husband.

Evelyn laughed; for the Doctor nudged her arm so triumphantly, that she could not help it. But even as the first fortune-teller retired—discomfited, it appeared, by the man's superior penetration—another of the same trade stepped forward, and lifting her dark penetrating eyes

to Evelyn's face, then in a cursory manner to the Doctor's, contemptuously observed.

"You ain't hit the nail on the right head yet, my master, for as wise as you thinks yourself, May and December never come together, and besides, the lady's bespoken already for some one beyond the seas. But, if you'll put silver in my hand, lady," she continued, lifting her eyes again to Evelyn's, as she addressed her more particularly; "I'll tell you that which will please you better than any thing I could say of yourself: for I will tell you the very day and hour when strength will visit the dear little gentleman yonder, and when—"

But before she could complete the sentence, the Doctor had moved indignantly away, dragging the laughing Evelyn with him, and continuing to growl out whenever any stoppage in the crowd gave him breath to do so.

"May and December! The impudent hussey! Not but what you are a very May, and all that is beautiful besides in May, my dear," he politely added, in a sort of parenthesis. "But to call *me* December! Now, if she had said Septem-

ber, or even October, I should not have objected, but December! Pah, I feel as if I had icicles clinging to my beard already. The black-eyed brazen-faced son of a gun! Take my advice, Wyllie, and never listen to a gipsy as long as you live, you'll get nothing but lies and rubbish for your pains."

"I don't think she is a gipsy," Evelyn observed, when the laugh was over. "At least, she does not talk like one, and evidently does not belong to the same set as the girl who spoke first."

At Wyllie's earnest request, they lingered another hour in the fair, but by that time the evening was closing in so rapidly, that they had just decided upon returning homewards; when Denis, who had been lingering a little in the rear, suddenly brought himself and his convoy into a line with the others, and touching his hat to the Doctor, said—

"If you plaize, sir. Do you think there's any likelihood of Miss Lily's being in the fair to-night?"

"Lily—Impossible!" Evelyn and the Doctor exclaimed almost in the same moment.

“Well, Sir, if it’s impossible, of coorse it is, and in that case its only her fetch that is in it,” Denis answered composedly. “But ghost or girril, I seen her just now, as plain as I see you and Miss Evelyn this minute.”

“What—you saw her this minute, Denis?”

“This minute, sir. At the door of the tent fornent you;” and Denis indicated with his finger a booth for dancing, round which a little knot of idlers were collected. “Looking in at the dancers she was, along with the others, and she hooked on to Masther Frederick’s arrum.”

“Frederick. Oh, no! no! Surely not with Frederick,” cried Evelyn, struck with a sudden presentiment of evil.

“Then, may be it was my eyes decaived me afther all, Miss;” said Denis, feeling sorry to grieve her, and yet, too certain of the fact he had stated, to be able to retract with any show of real conviction. “Any ways, what with the turn of the head and the cock of the hat, it was the very moral of the young masther for all that.”

“It cannot—it must not be,” cried Evelyn,

unwilling to admit of such confirmation of Lily's elopement, as the association of Frederick with the lady in question afforded. "You must have been mistaken, Denis. Why, you can hardly know him by sight! you never saw him but once, and then only for a minute."

"Thru for you, Miss—but that wanst I took his measure from head to foot; (with my eyes of coorse, I mane); and let Denis O'Daly alone for remembering a bôy after wanst he has taken his inches."

"It cannot be Lily," said Dr. Spencer, in answer to Evelyn's appealing glances. "We should certainly have heard before now, if she had left the 'Ferns.' Frederick it might be, to be sure, and if we can only get hold of him, it may be the saving of him yet."

"Then, pray let us follow him," cried Evelyn eagerly, but the Doctor kept her back, while he questioned Denis.

"He had a lady with him, you are certain, Denis?"

"Miss Lily—or her fetch, sir, arrum and arrum, quite sisterly and confidential like."

“If it is not Lily,” observed the Doctor turning very gently and tenderly towards Evelyn, “it is too probably some one whom he would rather his sister shouldn’t see in his company—rather, most likely, his sister shouldn’t meet at all; therefore, it would do more harm than good, my dear, if you attempted to follow him just now.”

“But you, at least, will try and save him, won’t you, Doctor?”

“I will do my best. But in the first place we must try and discover who are his companions, and what he is doing in this old world—out of the way sort of place; and Denis will be the best person for this purpose, because—”

“Will I go afther him at wanst, sir?” cried Denis, trembling with eagerness.

“You’ll do nothing of the sort, you omad-hawn,” replied his master. “Because you see, my dear,” he continued, explaining himself to Evelyn, “though Denis did measure his inches, it is not likely that Frederick returned the compliment; and therefore the chances are that he is still in a lamentable state of ignorance as to the fact even of Denis O’Daly’s existence at all; to



say nothing of the extra circumstance of his being my servant—”

“Of coorse, sir, of coorse,” cried Denis. “He doesn’t know me no more nor the babe unborn. Why would he? when he never seen me but wanst, and that wanst his back was to me, and he talking and laughing like mad with Miss Lily, and never an eye in his head for any one else. Small blame to him neither, for a purtier little crayture he is not likely to meet with between this and the Shannon; barrin, may be, his sister—if it war manners to say so—”

“But the boy—the boy!” cried the doctor impatiently. “You eternal prate box, where is Frederick gone to now?”

“In undher that tent, sir. Miss Lily cotched sight of me, I think, for I seen her nudge his arrum, and then the two went in together. I never tuk my eye off it since, so unless there’s a doore at the other end they couldn’t come out unknownst, and if you and Miss Evelyn will just say the word, I’ll be afther them in a jiffy.”

“No, you won’t, dunder head!” cried the

doctor; "you'll do nothing of the sort. In his present company if he suspected your purpose, he would do his best to defeat it. What you will do is just this; you'll contrive to dodge in and out of the tents, as if you were the idle man (that, confound it, you are), until you have made sure of your game. But once that is done, Denis; run him down, I say, run him down, and never you dare to exhibit that bronze face of yours at my door until you can tell me something of his company and whereabouts, in Southampton."

Denis was about to plunge forward at once, but suddenly remembering himself he drew back and hesitated.

"If I am to folly that plan, I mayn't be back before midnight, docthor."

"What of that?" said the doctor gruffly, "you're not afraid of the moon spoiling your complexion, I suppose, are you?"

"Oh, sorra fear I have of that, for all your jibin' and jeerin', docthor. Only if I do not come back before midnight, I hope you'll remember it was at you're own biddin' I done it, and not be

scrimmagin' and dischargin' of me as if it was my fault and not yours that I didn't."

"Of course not, of course not, Denis; always provided, you don't come back so—"

And the doctor crooked his little finger significantly, and shook it in his servant's face.

"You understand me—hey, Denis?"

"P'raps I do," replied the latter indignantly: "but the worst enemy ever I had, would never have daured for to say that when there was work to be done Denis O'Daly was the boy to spile sport by licker. And sure your honor ought to know that far better nor any one else, for devil a dhrop you ever diskivered upon me on the hottest day in Ingee when wanst we were afther a tiger or a leppard—"

"Well, mind you don't try a drop this time," said the doctor; "for the very salvation of this poor boy may depend upon your keeping your wits about you."

"I won't, sir, let me alone for that; I won't," said Denis, and he was just starting off again, when the doctor, who never could resist a joke, caught him hastily by the arm and said,—

“Stop, Denis, what are you in such a hurry for, man? I’ve a good mind to make you take the pledge on the spot, in order to set my mind at rest on the subject.”

“Ah, don’t now, don’t, sir,” cried Denis in a tone of such real or affected terror, that Wyllie laughed outright, and even Evelyn, in spite of her anxieties could hardly refrain from smiling. “Sure you wouldn’t be so hard upon an ould faithful sarvant, or upon yourself either,” he added in an undertone; “for d— be from me if ever you’d see a bit of fun in the house again, if wanst you banished me and the whiskey from each other.”

“Well, I won’t, then,” said the doctor, affecting to suffer himself to be persuaded. “But mind, only on condition that you bring me back some certain intelligence of the boy to-night. And now be off with you at once. I’ll see to master Wyllie’s chair, so you needn’t look as if you thought his life depended on your exertions.”

Thus dismissed, Denis darted gladly towards the crowded tent; while taking his place at the handle of Wyllie’s chair the good old doctor

wheeled bravely on. It was a relief to Evelyn that he turned at once out of the noisy pathway; and sadly and silently she followed him until they reached some fields a little below the spot where the fair was held, and which looked doubly green and quiet, she thought, by their contrast with the hub-bub and bustle she had left behind her. Up to that moment, she and her companion, as if by mutual consent, had continued silent; but no sooner had the doctor dropped the handle of the chair, bidding Wyllie amuse himself with a book while he rested himself from his exertions, than Evelyn approached him, saying,—

“Oh, surely, sir, it is impossible! Frank’s little sister with that unhappy boy!”

The doctor moved a little further away, so as to be quite out of Wyllie’s hearing, and then facing suddenly round upon Evelyn, gave way to the indignation that for some time past had been boiling within him.

“I tell you what, Miss Evelyn,” he cried; “nothing is difficult or impossible to the hard-heartedness and wickedness of man.”

“ But Frank’s own sister ! ”

“ Was Frank’s own pupil also,” retorted the doctor with an emphasis on the word that made Evelyn shudder. “ Tell me, Evelyn,” he asked after a moment’s thought, “ have you ever had any reason to suspect an attachment between them ? ”

“ Certainly I have thought it occasionally, especially of late. Lily was so strange at times. But then she is such a child that I never could bring myself to think seriously about it.”

“ A child ! to be sure she is — a mere, pretty, thoughtless, chattering child,” groaned the doctor ; “ and yet will the child’s fault be visited all the same upon the woman’s head. Alas ! Lily, Lily—who’d have thought it ! Yesterday, so bright and glad, and beautiful to look on—to-day—an out-cast ! perhaps, among the hundred thousand other out-casts of this world.”

There were tears in the doctor’s eyes as he spoke thus ; but Evelyn did not see them, for he had taken off his hat, perhaps to allow the evening air to play upon his heated brow, and was now using it to shade his face. She only heard his



words, therefore, and they seemed even in the very fullness of their pity to be pronouncing a harsher judgment upon Lily than Evelyn in her sisterly love for Frederick could believe to be deserved. She ventured to remonstrate—

“Oh, do not speak so harshly, sir! I know,” she added, the proud blood mounting scarlet to her forehead—“I know that to be Frederick’s wife, as he is at present, is to possess no very honorable position in the estimation of the world; but still, surely, surely it does not entitle her to the epithet of out-cast?”

“We must hope so, at any rate!” replied the doctor sadly, and evidently checking some very strong expression of his own feelings in deference to those of his companion. “And yet, I cannot but tremble when I think about her! A child! aye, indeed, a very child she is; but mark me—a child without any habit of obedience, any idea of restraining her own wishes, any fixed principles of any kind, to guide and control her actions. A child forsooth! who prates like a parrot of bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and thinks she can prove her own claims to in-



tellectual superiority, by throwing off the whole-some bondage of religion. A child, in one word, who unites the fatuity of her apparent age with the passions and independant spirit of a woman. Evelyn! Evelyn! One need only listen to her for a quarter-of-an-hour to feel that her principles are like shifting sands; and woe to the woman in whom they are thus unsettled. Let her heart be ever so lightly stirred to love—and moral ruin is sure to follow.”

“But, after all, Denis may have been mistaken,” observed Evelyn, falling back upon another kind of consolation when the first had failed her. “And it may have been neither Frederick nor Lily he has seen.”

“Certainly he may have been; and most fervently do I hope he has—” the doctor broke off abruptly, for his quick ear caught the sound of voices on the other side of the hedge, along which he and Evelyn had been walking during their present conversation.

“It must be wrong, Esther!” said the sweet, sad voice of a child apparently, and in a slightly foreign accent.

Evelyn moved forward with the intention of warning the speaker of their presence, but the doctor held her back and whispered—

“Not for your life, Miss Evelyn. Sit down and be quiet, can’t you? I like to study natural history, and this is too good a chance to be neglected. Surely my ears deceive me, or yonder is the lamb preaching to the wolf.”

But there was nothing to justify the doctor’s idea of a wolf in the mournful tones that answered after a moment’s pause, apparently of thought:

“May-happen it is, Aileen, though I can’t say as I sees it so clear as you do.”

“Jim thinks it wrong too,” observed the first speaker, with an emphasis on the first word, that seemed to say Jim’s opinion settled the question in her own mind altogether.

“And what can Jim know about it more nor you and I knows already?” replied the other coldly, and with evident scepticism as to the infallibility of the individual alluded to.

“Not more, but as much, Esther; and I am sure besides, that there is something in one’s own

heart which almost always tells one, when one is doing wrong."

"Good," muttered the doctor, "didn't I say it? Natural religion that.—surely its possessor is of the genus 'sheep.'"

"Hush," whispered Evelyn; for the same voice was speaking still, and she felt herself strangely taken by the earnestness, yet child-like freshness of its tones.

"Besides, even without that feeling, I know it is wrong, and so does Jim, for the catechism says so: fortune telling is particularly mentioned."

"Capital, capital!" and the doctor had some difficulty in expressing his approbation in the undertone needed to prevent discovery, "something more than natural religion there! Sheep of the fold Catholic, or universal, of course! But hist, the wolf makes answer."

"Well, my birdie, it may be as you say surelie; though I don't see exactly the great harm you talk of. Howsomdever, as no one ever learnt me the difference between right and wrong, it follows in course that I know nothing wot-ever about it."

"Bad, bad!" commented the doctor in a whisper, "No harm to tell a heap of lies and nonsense (May and December to wit), to a pack of giggling girls and their left-lègged lubberly lubins! Black sheep that, or rather goat—left side and so on. But hist, the lamb does baa again."

"But, Esther, it isn't true what you tell them."

"Of course it isn't," growled the doctor from his side of the hedge while Esther from hers made answer:

"Why blessee, child they knows it ain't, quite as well as I do myself."

"Oh, Esther!" cried the other, "I am sure they don't all know. That girl with the pink ribbons, for instance, who was to be, you said, married to a rich young farmer with quantities of cows and sheep;—she believed every word you said I'm certain."

"Lor' love 'ee, wot a innocent you be. Why, Aileen, the werry man himself was there. Didn't you see him? the cove in a blue coat and red choaker close to her elbow. When I come up first

to tell her fortune, I seed him nudge her like, and she began to giggle directly, and color up as red as a rose. That were all I wanted for to help me to a good guess at the rest; and if he hadn't the ring in his pocket that moment, I'm blessed if it ain't there now, for I seed 'em agin as we came down here, a cheapening of jewellery at old Heskott's booth."

"But even then, Esther, it was only a guess, and you said it, as if you were quite certain. Besides, it isn't true that you are a gipsy, or that your face is that walnut colour. It is all a lie from beginning to end, and that makes me feel sure it is wrong, even without the catechism and Jim to tell me."

"Sharp little casuist that," said the doctor, "sit still for a minute, Miss Evelyn, will you, while I try if I can't get a peep at its reverence."

Evelyn did as she was desired, and he walked cautiously up and down the hedge, looking for such a gap as might enable him to accomplish his design. In a few minutes afterwards he beckoned her to approach, and holding her care-

fully by one hand while he parted the intervening branches with the other, she was enabled by bending a little over to obtain a full view of the speakers in the field beyond them.

It was a very pretty picture.

A girl with eyes as black as night, and dark hair banded smoothly across her brow, from whence it was yet more effectually prevented straying by a scarlet handkerchief, tied gipsy fashion beneath the chin, sat within the shadow of an overhanging larch tree, looking down with an expression of countenance half scornful, half relenting upon a young child who reclined at her feet, and who with her golden hair and delicate wild rose bloom, made just such a contrast as a painter would have loved to copy, to the eastern looking apparition at her side.

A boy was stretched at a little distance, sleeping apparently on the grass, his face being half hidden by the arm on which his head was pillowed; but neither Evelyn nor the doctor took much notice of him, so engrossed were they both with the group more immediately before them.

“Well it’s my own skin and I’ve a right to



make it wot color I please,” argued the dark eyed girl; “fine folks do as much for theirs, and excepting that they dyes pink while I dyes brown, I can’t say as I sees much difference between us.”

“But you do it for money, Esther!”

Esther only answered by a laugh; such a laugh! Happily the meaning of its bitter irony was lost on the innocence of her who had called it forth; but it was not until she had repeated the observation that the other answered, impatience visibly striving with the usual kindness of her manner:

“In course I do, and where’s the harm I wonder, when Dick would blow me skies high without, and it’s better than stealing any how.”

“Jim says *it is stealing*,” said the child, shaking her head with a dreamy, thoughtful movement, while she looked straight into Esther’s eyes.

“I’ll buy her! by George and St. Patrick I will!” cried the delighted doctor aloud; and forgetting in his enthusiasm that he was occupying no very safe position on the top of a steep bank,



he stept hastily forwards, and slipt, slid, and stumbled in consequence, (having luckily let Evelyn go when he found himself falling) until he finally plunged head foremost into the midst of the very group whose proceedings he had been so unceremoniously watching from above.

The gipsy girl stood up, looking dark as thunder at this unexpected invasion of her territories, and drawing Aileen at the same time towards her, with a frown which boded little welcome to the guest whom fate had sent her. It had always been the doctor's boast, however, that he had never under any circumstances whatever found himself at a loss either for "brass or politeness;" and certainly the vaunt was justified by his conduct upon the present occasion. No sooner had he recovered his footing, than picking up his hat, which had escaped from him during his enforced descent, he advanced towards the sulky looking gipsy, and with a bow that would have passed muster at the court of Louis the Magnificent, politely commenced:

"I beg pardon, madam, but may I ask what is the price of the little girl at your side? I

have taken a singular fancy to her, and would be very willing to give a good one."

"Sir," said the girl proudly, and evidently puzzled as to whether he was in joke or earnest, "our people don't sell their kinchens; you must look elsewhere for that."

"Indeed," he answered, with affected astonishment. "I thought you stole them for no other purpose."

Esther's eyes flashed fire, and she looked as if about to fling back a passionate reply, but suddenly checking the impulse, she answered with an evident effort at seeming calm:

"But though I can't sell the child, I can tell your fortin for you, and may-happen it's written in your hand that you'll yet be the father of many a such as she, without the expense of buying other people's."

"No, I thank you, Queen Esther," replied the doctor, recognising by this time in the dark face before him, that of the very gipsy whose remarks on his age had so insulted him at the fair. "It needs neither ghost nor gipsy to tell one how December ends—frost and snow, and all that

sort of thing, you know, which it certainly isn't worth sixpence to hear of."

"But the pretty lady, sir," replied the girl with a half smile, which revealed her consciousness of having given offence; and turning as she spoke towards the gap in the hedge, (now considerably enlarged by the doctor's plunge,) where Evelyn was standing to watch his proceedings; "the pretty lady, sir; her fortin has never been told her yet, and may be she would not object to it now."

Thus appealed to Miss De Burghe leaped down and joined the others, but almost instinctively she took the doctor's arm as she did so, for Esther still looked dark and threatening, even while doing her best to keep the feeling under, as she added:

"If you'll first cross my hand with silver, I will tell her anything she wishes to know, either for herself or the little gemman on the other side of the hedge."

"Whew, whew!" cried the doctor. "Why you know the whole generation by heart already, my girl. Now I wonder," he added, laying his

hand upon Aileen's golden curls, while his eye glanced meaningly towards the sleeping boy, "I wonder if you could give quite as accurate an account of your little companions here, supposing I were about to ask it."

"The gal is my niece," replied Esther with unhesitating effrontery, and withdrawing Aileen at the same time from beneath the doctor's caressing fingers, "and the boy a sleepin' on the grass is her brother. We travelled all last night to be in time for the fair, which is why he's so heavy this blessed arternoon. And now, pretty lady," she continued, turning to Evelyn and once more resuming for her benefit the official tone appertaining to her present calling. "Won't you let me look at that lily white hand of yours for a moment? My mind misgives me, but there's a wonderful fortin writtin in that 'ere broken line that I sees across it."

"Thank you," replied the doctor; before Evelyn, who was occupied extracting a thorn from the very hand which had won this encomium from the gipsy, could find time to answer. "You are very condescending, no doubt, Queen

Esther; but unfortunately my fair friend here has an objection to your pell mell method of diving into the future. She doesn't approve of omens, dreams, and such like fooleries," he added, fixing his eyes on Aileen, whose blue orbs instantly flashed intelligence, while her cheek glowed crimson; "and what is more, and may perhaps seem stranger still to you, she doesn't believe them either."

"Like enough," the girl coldly answered; "yet for all that p'raps she wouldn't be sorry to hear sommut of one as she knows of beyond the seas, or to be learnt when he is coming back to claim her for his bride."

Evelyn changed color in spite of herself; the doctor saw that the shot had told, but not wishing her to feel that she had betrayed herself, he went on lightly.

"Then, since you know so much of his affairs already, Queen Esther, perhaps you can also do us the favour to say whether he has yet led the young lady you wot of, whom he met during his wanderings abroad, to the hymeneal altar. In plain English, is he married yet?"

“He is faithful,” said the gipsy in her most oracular manner.

“To the girl he left behind him?” Doctor Spencer did not exactly say the words, but he did whistle the air to which they of right belong, and was understood and answered as if they had been spoken.

“You are about right there, old gemman. He couldn’t if he would, be unfaithful to such as she.”

“Very satisfactory indeed,” replied the doctor. “And pray may I further enquire, Queen Esther, whether it was the spirit in the walnut tree that has revealed all these interesting items of our household anxieties to your prophetic soul?”

The girl looked keenly at him, her bold, bright eyes fairly glittering with suppressed amusement, though the rest of her face was as grave as ever, while she answered with a solemn affectation of demeanour:

“I don’t know nothin’ wotever about walnut trees, but I have heard tell as stone walls have ears sometimes, and may happen they are those of the spirit you speaks of.”



“Very possible; that is to say, always supposing that spirits have ears,” said the doctor, now laughing outright. “But you haven’t answered me yet about the little girl, Queen Esther. Have her I must, so you can ask what you like for her. You’ll come with me, my dear, won’t you?” he added, addressing himself directly to Aileen; “you’ll come with us? and

“‘Roses shall crown you, and ever green myrtle,—  
And diamonds to fasten your light flowing kirtle.’”

A flash from Esther’s dark eyes interrupted his impromptu stanzas, while it seemed to transfix Aileen to the spot with fear; and grasping the child yet more tightly by the shoulder she answered in a tone intended to put a stop to all further jesting:

“I’ve telled you already, Sir, that she is not on sale.”

“But if she likes to come?” said the doctor, appealing as a last resource to Aileen’s own possible wishes on the subject.

“But she don’t though,” replied Esther promptly, “Do you, Aileen?”



“No,” she answered faintly; ‘and the expression of her face as she said it puzzled the doctor, for skilled in physiognomy as he boasted himself to be, he saw at once that if there was regret in those speaking glances, there was love for Esther also; and that of whatever or whomsoever the child might be afraid, it certainly was not of her present companion. Nevertheless, the more he thought about it, the more he felt as if there were some unpleasant mystery in the business, though the child’s expressed assent to Esther’s proposition made it nearly impossible to unravel it at present. The truth was, however, that much as Aileen longed for liberty, Esther had succeeded in persuading her, that her only chance of ever being restored to her mother depended upon her remaining quietly in her present position, so long as her uncle saw fit that she should do so. She had, in fact, by the exercise of a steadfast, quiet will, accompanied by a kindness that never varied or faltered for a moment, acquired unbounded influence not only over the mind of Aileen but of Jim as well. For he also had been confided to her

guardianship, and she had made use of this influence to impress them both with such an overwhelming idea of the power and omniscience of the wild beings among whom their present lot was cast, and of the fearful punishment awaiting them if they made any attempt at escaping; that even had the opportunity actually presented itself to them, it may be doubted whether either of them would have had courage to accept it.

So now the poor child answered as she was desired; and chancing moreover to see some of the men returning from the fair, clung all at once so timidly to her companion that the doctor's doubts as to their relationship began unwillingly to vanish; and when Esther impatiently repeated, "You see she don't want to; so cut your luckie will you, for yonder's some of our people, and they won't be over pleased to find you here," he did not see fit to pursue the adventure further, but slipping a crown into Aileen's hand, and patting her lovingly on the head, turned his back upon the party and returned with Evelyn to the place where Wyllie was awaiting them in his chair.

## CHAPTER V.

THAT night, long after Wyllie was fast asleep, Evelyn sat in the moonlit garden with Dr. Spencer, waiting the return of Denis from the fair. Sometimes they talked in low, sad tones of the living dear ones, for whom their hearts were beating anxiously; and sometimes of the long departed, over whose memory they might weep indeed, but with no mingling of the shame and sorrow which threatened to darken their recollections of the former.

Aileen and her strange protectress were not forgotten either. But after a long discussion on the subject they had come unwillingly to the

conclusion, that as children cannot easily be stolen with impunity in these days of order and policemen, and as the little girl herself had made no attempt whatever, either to enlist their pity, or appeal to their assistance, they must have been misled by the romance of her appearance, into a false estimation of her real position, and therefore that it would be a simple absurdity to try to rescue her from it.

“And now, my dear,” continued the doctor, who, to do him only justice, had been talking far less for the sake of talking than in the hope of beguiling Evelyn’s thoughts from more distressing subjects of conjecture, “now that we have settled Queen Esther’s hash, what is all this she told us about the gentleman over the water? Ah, sly little puss, I have found you out you see, and it was not for nothing that you were talking this evening so fast and so freely of Mr. Frank’s opinions. You thought to lure me from the real object did you? but you see it was written in the book of fate, or the palm of your lily white hand, as Queen Esther would phrase it, that I was to come at the truth to-night.”

“ Oh, spare me, sir,” cried Evelyn in a voice of such unfeigned distress and with such a look of real pain upon her brow, that the doctor would probably have desisted, if it had not suddenly occurred to him, that there might be more real kindness in laying bare this secret sorrow, than in suffering it to lie rankling still, in the hidden places of her soul.

“ Only one word, my dear; Evelyn, your mind is true as steel and clear as crystal. In one word, tell me frankly, did Walter St. Clair ever propose for you?”

“ He did, sir.”

“ And you refused him.”

“ I refused him.”

“ And yet you loved him,” rejoined the doctor, and there was something of gentle reproach in his voice; “ nay, never shake your head at me! I know you women well enough, and I say you loved him—and yet you refused him—Evelyn, how could you?”

“ My mother was on her death bed, and I could not leave her,” Evelyn answered in a smothered voice.

“Good! but Walter could have waited. No need, poor fellow, to banish him for that to India.”

“She was not happy,” continued Evelyn in a soft dreamy way, as if she were quite unconscious of this last observation; “she had not one thought or feeling in common with her husband; she was the humblest and gentlest of creatures, he the proudest and the hardest. *She* cared for money only as a means of doing good to others, *he* worshipped it as the power which was to restore his ancestral name to the place it had well nigh lost by poverty in his father’s life time.”

“Very bad indeed, my dear, no doubt; but still not a case for you to meddle with. You were not born to be Mr. Sutherland’s keeper. It was not for you to bid him ‘bend the knee at any other shrine.’”

“Her eldest son,” continued Evelyn in the same abstracted manner, “was already enstalled as a pupil of Frank; and too well, poor mother, she foresaw nothing but evil for him in the training and example both of father and of tutor.”

“ Still here again you were quite powerless to mend matters. You couldn’t teach him greek and latin, you know; and if you could, I doubt if Frederick was a lad likely to take his lessons kindly of a woman.”

“ And as if this were not enough of sorrow and anxiety for her, Wyllie not only promised to be sickly, but his father took a dislike to him, because he fancied him in some degree the cause of his mother’s failing strength, and too rapidly approaching death.”

“ Wyllie had nothing whatever to say to it,” replied the doctor indignantly. “ It was his own mammon-worship and hard unbending temper that broke her down, poor soul, and crushed her. The earthen vessel and the iron—an old story, but a true one; true a hundred times it has been, and true a hundred times it will be, so long as human beings of unequal temper get wedded to each other. No, my dear, believe me, Wyllie is innocent of his mother’s death, whatever his father may have to answer for on that score.”

“ His father unhappily thought otherwise,”



said Evelyn. "Whatever might be the cause of her decline, however, my poor mother was dying and she knew it; but certainly she sank more rapidly after the doctors had given it as their opinion that Wyllie would grow up a cripple."

"The doctors were idiots, every one of them," replied their brother by profession; "and I wrote to her to tell her so, but she would not believe me. Sharks! they wanted their guinea a day, and so they made poor Wyllie's weak back and spindle legs an excuse to get it. But we are wandering from the main point. I want to come at your reason for refusing poor Walter, my dear?"

"My dear sir, havn't I said it? Surely you must be satisfied with the reasons I have given."

"Devil a bit," he answered bluntly. "If Wyllie had been ten times the cripple they pretended that he was, surely his father was rich enough to buy nurses and nursing for him."

"But he could not buy a mother's love," said Evelyn in a low voice, "and it was a mother's love she wanted for him. She dreaded his father's

future harshness towards him when she should be here no more to shield him from it; for it was evident even in those early days that while Mr. Sutherland worshipped Frederick for his boyish strength and beauty, he looked with disgust upon the effeminate loveliness of poor Wyllie. She dreaded also the after tutorship of Frank. She dreaded—poor mother!—she dreaded every thing, and with reason, for the little Benjamin of her failing years; and so she made me promise that I would never leave him until I could honestly and conscientiously feel that he was in hands as safe and loving as my own.”

“And I must say, Miss Evelyn, it is the only thing your mother ever did for which I cannot thoroughly forgive her and approve her. Evelyn,” he went on, in a voice so different from his usual cheery manner, that she turned towards him in surprise, “do you not know that it is a fearful thing a woman does, when she says ‘no’ to a man who loves her? I do not mean any man or all men, but a man *par excellence*; such a man as, from all my former knowledge of him, I judge Walter to have been.

It is the fashion to talk a deal of sentimental nonsense about the enduring nature of a woman's love, and yet believe me, a man's love, when it is love, and not a shadow and a vanity instead, is stronger and more enduring still. True, a disappointment will not throw him into a consumption, or make his hair turn grey; nor will it change the settled current of his life, nor draw him from its business and its pleasures, or even prevent him, when his hour is come, from choosing another helpmate. He will be happy, too, if he is fortunate in his choice, but not with the fresh, young happiness he would have enjoyed before. Something will have gone out from him which never can return again, and in the deep, lone places of his heart there will be a void, which, however an after growth of happiness may cover it, will be a void for all that still. Just as an oak tree will bear leaf and fruit, and never give you reason to suspect that for all its exterior beauty, there be hollow places within its sturdy stem."

The doctor paused abruptly; for all at once it occurred to him that Evelyn was weeping, but

after a moment's thought he took her hand reverently and affectionately in his own, and went on again:

"Nay, nay, my dear, I don't by any means want to distress you, or to make you think that Walter is unhappy. I dare say he is well enough consoled by this time; so do not cry, I beg of you, for I cannot bear to see it."

"It would make me so wretched if I thought anything I had ever said or done had thrown such a shadow as you talk of on his path," Evelyn murmured in a low voice.

"Then for Heaven's sake do not think any thing of the sort," cried the doctor, forgetting in his good-natured perplexity that he himself had very strongly suggested the idea. "Nay, my dear, believe me, it is very possible that you are one of his most sunny memories of the past."

Evelyn tried to smile, but she did not dare to trust her voice to answer. It was evident that her heart had been startled out of its enforced quietude, and that it would be some time yet ere it recovered its composure.

"After all, my dear," continued Dr. Spencer,

after a long pause, during which he had arrived at this very conclusion—"After all, I was only (after man's selfish fashion) thinking of myself while I was discoursing of another, for I also have been a rejected man; and that, too, by your mother, Evelyn."

"My mother!"

"Aye, Evelyn! I loved her from the very hour I first knew her, as the daughter of Monsieur de St. Arnoul, a French emigré, of noble birth, but scanty means, eking out his daily-bread, and hers, as a teacher of his own language; but I could not propose to her then, for I was a seventh son, and as poor in reality and expectation as herself. I loved her still when she became the happy wife of your good father, Evelyn; and when he died—well, well, it is no matter now—but she would not have died as she did, a broken-hearted woman, if she had listened to me then. She married Mr. Sutherland instead, yet still, I loved her too well to be angry with her, and so I went on loving her till her death, with a love which I have never given to any other woman upon earth, and which v      d not

even allow me to quarrel with her for not loving me enough. And now it is my pleasure and my pride to think that she knew the worth (albeit, she could not return it) of such a love as mine—that at the very moment, when she was thwarting my wishes as a lover, she confided fully in me as a friend,—and that the last letter she wrote upon her death-bed was to me, recommending her children to my love and care, and thereby making them all (but you more especially, my dear,) as precious to this old foolish heart as if they had been my own. But we will not talk any more about this just now, so dry your eyes and smile whilst I tell you why; or, at least, partly the reason why I felt vexed at your having given such a promise to your mother as you did. Do you not see, my dear, that it was all as one as condemning yourself to old maidery at once.”

“And is that such a very dreadful sentence in your eyes?” asked Evelyn, unable to refrain from smiling through her tears.

“Not in a general way certainly. I had a couple of maiden aunts once, so good, so charitable; but above all, so self-denying in their



charity, that were it but for their sakes alone, I should repudiate with indignation all the fashionable cant of the present day about the selfishness of the single life. Selfishness! why bless me! those dear old women did more good in a general self-sacrificing no-thanks-getting fashion in a week, than any married twain, shackled as they needs must be by those home interests which become their first duty from the moment they became parents, could have effected on the same means in a twelvemonth. Therefore, my dear, I greatly admire the single life (chosen or accepted for God's sake of course) in a general sort of way as I said before; but still, when it comes to individual cases, I can't say I much like to picture you to my mind's eye with a hideous yellow front by way of a wig, and a brown gown and bunch of keys, and jam pots and preserves and all that sort of thing, you know—a regular old maid.”

“But I mean to wear my own hair grey,” cried Evelyn, laughing, “and a black gown and no keys; and as to jam pots and preserves, I never shall trouble my head about them, so I hope to be able to vindicate the entire sisterhood



in my own proper person from any undue weakness you may be inclined to impute to them on that score."

"In that case, you will be quite a model old maid, my dear, and I will cite you accordingly as an example to others. And, one word more, Miss Evelyn—you will never feel discontented or lonely, will you?"

"Discontented, no," replied she after a moment's thought. "But lonely—yes: at least, I am afraid I shall feel so at times. While Wyllie lives, and remains all in all to me as he is at present, of course, my hopes and fears for him will make my feelings more like those of a mother than an old maid; but should God please to take him to himself, or should the boy, from any cause, just, or unjust, ever cease to love me dearly, then it would be hard indeed for a heart, so covetuous of sympathy, as I fear mine is, not to feel lonely sometimes."

"No, you won't, my dear," replied the Doctor suddenly, and turning round his chair so as to sit face to face to Evelyn, he took one of her fingers lightly between his own, and went on

earnestly; "you made a great sacrifice once for God's sake, and depend upon it, God is too just to let you be the loser by it."

"Yes, if it had been for God's sake wholly and entirely, I should feel quite sure of that," said Evelyn. "If he had called me, I mean, to his especial love and service in religion."

"Well, my dear. He called you, not indeed to that especial love of which you speak, but yet to an especial duty which had its origin, at least, in love as especial as itself. And do you think that He will be less mindful of your reward, because that your obedience to His inspiration has been a duty only and not a gladness, also. Evelyn, I say a gladness, because, had he called you as he called an Agnes or a Cecilia, you would undoubtedly have thrown yourself into your sacrifice, with a joy which would have mingled with, and in a manner neutralized the pain. And do you think that He will regard it as less heroic, that you took up a cross without any unction of gladness to make it lighter? That you voluntarily put on a crown, which had never a single rose to shed beauty and perfume among its thorns?"

Again, Evelyn was weeping and could make no answer, but this time her tears were not all of sorrow!

Hitherto, with the wonderful spirit of endurance which was a portion of her nature, she had closed her lips upon her secret, and frank and confiding as she was in all things else, had recoiled with instinctive delicacy from disclosing the wounded feelings of her heart to those among whom she lived, and for some of whom the sacrifice had been made. But now, at last, she had found a friend, who, notwithstanding the roughness and downrightedness of his outside manner, possessed much of the intuitive tact and delicacy of a woman; and it was an inexpressible relief to her, to feel that while almost as it were in spite of herself he had fathomed her secret sorrow, he was also capable not only of yielding most reverend sympathy to it, but a full and hearty appreciation also, of the motives for which she had embraced it. As strange as it may seem, it never had occurred to her before, that there was more than her common duty in the promise she had given to her mother. Hers was a

character of more than ordinary simplicity and strength, and therefore she could do heroic things as if they had been merely in the ordinary routine of her daily life.

It had been simply impossible, she thought, to allow her mother's death hour to be disturbed by anxious cogitations concerning her child, or to see that child himself abandoned by his mother's death to the cold cares of an unloving father, without coming forward at once to remedy the evil. And though by the one act of self-abnegation consequent upon this resolution, she knew that she had blighted all her days, and had put the damp and mildew of repressed affection on her soul, and had denied herself to her own vocation, and had injured, perhaps irrevocably, the happiness of another; and all for the sake of one sickly, little child, who might any day fall a victim to the natural delicacy of his constitution, thus depriving her even of the very motive of her sacrifice; still not only had it never occurred to her to consider it as heroic, but she had been almost inclined to reproach herself with it as a

fault, that she could look upon it in the light of a sacrifice at all.

Quick at reading characters and motives, the doctor guessed all this from the very few words which she now let fall upon the subject; and feeling quite sure she had not yet derived all the comfort she might have done from a clearer perception of the duty she had accomplished, he endeavoured to rouse that consciousness within her, by showing how in fact her life had hitherto been one of higher self abnegation than under any ordinary circumstances she would have been called upon to accept of.

In this he succeeded beyond his hopes, and for the first time in her life perhaps, it flashed across her mind that God in His love had tested hers by making heavier demands upon it than lay within the ordinary routine of His providence towards His creatures, and that her own had neither failed nor faltered in the trial. It was a delicious feeling, and doubly so to one like Evelyn, whose standard of excellence was at all times high, and demanding great things of herself and others. It was a delicious feeling; and yet perhaps

she never so thoroughly comprehended the greatness of the suffering she had endured for years as at the very moment when she could measure it by the depth of joy and gratitude she was feeling then towards God, for having given her grace at once to accept the trial, and strength and patience (so far at least,) to achieve the purpose for which it had been intended. Therefore, although the conversation had called up many a vision of long and reluctantly abandoned happiness, and had renewed the memory of much sorrow, which time indeed might deaden, but could never entirely efface from her soul,—therefore were her tears as full of sweetness as of sorrow; and therefore could she confess to God and to herself that she would not exchange her present lot, lonely as it might prove to be, for a cup filled high and brimming over with all the most innocent delights, that the path she had turned aside from, could have offered to her acceptance.

Doctor Spencer saw and was satisfied with the effect which his words had so evidently produced; and for a little time he suffered her to weep



without interruption, but at last he laid his hand gently on her arm to bespeak her attention, and continued softly :

“I do not mean to say, my dear, that the sacrifice of an Agnes or an Agatha was not higher, because founded on a higher motive, the love of God unalloyed by any love for creatures whatsoever; but I do say that a sacrifice made to a mother’s love, that love which God himself seems to have appointed as the most sure and perfect image of His own for us, I do say, and feel most certain too, that a sacrifice made from such a motive must be of incalculable value in His sight, and must draw down incalculable blessings upon her to whom He has happily given grace and fortitude to meet it.”

The doctor paused, took a pinch of snuff, and after hesitating a little, once more resumed :

“I hope, my dear, I did not annoy you by what I said about old maids. I was only joking, of course you understood; because my own opinion is, that even if a woman has not expressly chosen the single life, but that God has put it on her by the obstinacy as it were of His great love,



which persisted in calling her to a higher state than she would have selected for herself; still I say, we should look upon her with reverence, as one who, if she cheerfully conform to the will of God in her regard, and if her life be at all correspondent to her calling, may some day be in possession of the inestimable privilege accorded to the virgin only, namely, to follow the lamb wheresoever He goeth. Surely this thought alone should make us Catholics, who admit the virtue of the single life, chary of joining in the senseless hue and cry against old maids, and in all the twaddle of our fashionable novels, about the selfishness of their vocation and the heaven appointed duties on the contrary of the wife and mother; which I don't deny, mind you, tho' I do flatly oppose myself to the popular prejudice, that she who exercises the charities of her nature in the very channel in which nature bids them flow, has more merit than she who, for a supernatural motive, and in the strength of a supernatural inspiration, brings them to bear upon those who have no other claim upon her than such as religion and pity can inspire—therefore I

say again, we should be reserved in our talk and feelings about old maids."

"Even if they do choose to wear a yellow wig and carry a bunch of keys," said Evelyn, now smiling really, while she brushed away her tears, for the doctor's long speech had given her time, as he meant it should, thoroughly to recover her composure.

"Even in that case; and be sure, my child," the old man added affectionately, "that if you choose to wear a whole rosary of keys, and to mount a wig as hideous as that of my old housekeeper within (and let me tell you that's not saying a trifle for its ugliness), even in that case, I should still look upon you with more affectionate admiration, than if you had been the wife of an Indian Nabob; for that God having called you to a most noble duty, you had performed it nobly and in a noble spirit. And now brush away the last of those tears I beg, for I cannot bear to think that I have made you shed them."

"Indeed, my dear sir, you would not be sorry if you knew what a relief to me they have been,

and how they and your kind words together, have made my heart seem lighter."

"Then I am very glad indeed that I ventured to speak as I have done; and that is all I will say at present on the subject. And now you had best go in, for you must be weary, and it will be quite in vain to wait for Denis any longer. If he brings good news, I promise you shall know it. So go to bed—but stay—one moment longer, and give me both your hands, while I make you promise that you will from this day forward, look upon me as a father—a grandfather if you like it better—I care not which you call me, so only that you will believe you may command me as if I were one in earnest, at any time, and in any way that suits you; and, in short, so that you feel as certain as I am myself that I would go to the ends of the earth to serve you."

Evelyn could not speak; and for only answer she raised the two hands by which he held her own gratefully to her lips; and then he drew her yet a little nearer to him, and pressed, while he bade God bless her, a kiss of fatherly affection on her brow.

And if she did not sleep that night for weary thoughts about Lily and her brother, still did she lay her head upon her pillow with such sweet consciousness of parental solicitude, watching over her, as had never gladdened her slumber yet since the day of her mother's death.

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN, on the morning after the event we have recorded in our last chapter, Evelyn entered the sunny little sitting room which had been appropriated to Wyllie for the prosecution of his studies, she found him (his lesson books flung contemptuously on one side) with flushed face and discontented looks, laying on the sofa.

“What is it, Wyllie?” she demanded. “It is a long time since I have seen you with a face like that.”

“It is because of my crutches, Evelyn! That stupid old Deborah flung them into the corner while I was busy with my Latin, so here I am

laying as helpless as a flat fish on the sands, for I can't walk without them; the old doctor may say what he pleases; I can't."

"Well, Wyllie," replied his sister gravely, "here are the crutches at last, and it is a small matter to look so wonderfully cross about, after all."

"Small thing, indeed!" he answered petulantly. "Do you call it a small thing to be growing up as helpless as a baby; dependent on any chance woman or child who is passing, for the mere power of changing my position."

"Dear Wyllie, it is not a small thing in itself, but it is a small thing compared to many other things which many other people have to suffer."

"'Tis no comfort to know there are others in the same boat as myself," grumbled Wyllie.

"No comfort certainly, Wyllie, but a lesson, that we should not repine too intensely at our own lot."

"After all there can be nothing worse," Wyllie went on in a half-complaining, half-apologetic manner, "than to be a cripple; for a cripple I shall be, let old Dr. Spencer say what he likes;

and I don't believe he knows a bit more of the matter than the London doctors he is so fond of abusing."

"Wyllie, you know I never talk to you when you are in these moods. Bye and bye I will come back, and then I am sure I shall find you more reasonable, and more inclined to do justice to the kind intentions of our dear old friend, the friend of our mother, Wyllie, long before either of us were born!"

"Oh, don't go, dear Evy!" cried Wyllie, his brief impatience already vanished; "my crutches, where are they!"

And seizing them he hobbled to the door so rapidly, that he caught Evelyn just as her hand was on the lock.

"Don't go, dear Evelyn, don't go; I am so sorry to have been such a savage."

And dropping the crutches he flung his arms round her neck and burst into tears. Evelyn half led, half carried him back to the sofa, put her arms round his neck, and waited quietly until he had mastered the sobs that choked him. This was soon accomplished, for Wyllie was



jealous of his manly dignity, and all the more so perhaps, because of the bodily infirmity by which it was endangered; so in a very few minutes he had swallowed down his hysterical sobs sufficiently to enable him to say, with a desperate attempt at a laugh:

“There, Evy, isn’t that quite enough to justify a savage word; at least,” he added, correcting himself, “a savage word to any one else, for nothing can excuse my giving it to you, who have had nothing but love and patience for me ever since I was born.”

“What is enough to make you savage and to justify you for being so? I don’t quite see yet either the cause or justification of all this sorrow.”

“Oh, Evy, don’t you see?” cried Wyllie, “can’t you see cause enough? It was bearable when I was only a baby, but now that I am growing up (Denis says that in a few years I shall be really quite a man) can’t you understand, Evelyn, that it is horrible to be obliged to be dragged about as if one were nothing but a log of wood, or a sick woman, or a baby?”

"I do see, dear Wyllie," replied his sister, folding him affectionately in her arms. "Believe me, I can both see and understand, that such helplessness is very trying to our proud human nature, and that it requires a strong mind and strong patience to bear up against it. And, perhaps, yours is not strong enough, Wyllie, and that it is for this reason God, who never permits us to be tried above our strength, has sent you our kind friend, Dr. Spencer, who, (now that you are reasonable again,) you will, I am sure, acknowledge, has done more to put you on your legs, than any other Doctor you ever had before."

"But, Evelyn. If he shouldn't succeed?"

"And even in that case, Wyllie, I shall not be anxious on your account, because I shall feel so sure, that if our good God sends you this affliction, He will send you grace to merit by it, —and in the mean time you will bear the suspense patiently, my little brother, will you not? A little for my sake, perhaps, but yet more for His who died on the cross for yours."

"Yes! for His. And as you say, a little for

yours as well, dear Evy. But, oh, it will be very, very dreadful! I used to think so, even when I was quite a little fellow; and when I used to hear the nurses, (never dreaming that I was listening), talk about it among themselves—but it is much worse to think of it now, Evelyn,—and every day it seems to become more so.”

“Poor child,” said Evelyn. “And yet I was so afraid of this very sense of depression and infirmity being inflicted on you, that they were forbidden even to name the subject in your presence.”

“Oh, they used to stop fast enough when they heard your foot on the staircase. But it didn’t signify in the least what they did, for I should have known it any how, without them.”

“But how, any how, Wyllie?”

“By my father’s face. He, who used to look so proudly upon Frederick, never passed me without a sort of sighing vexation in his manner.”

“Might it not have been a sort of sighing affection, Wyllie?”

“No,” said Wyllie shortly, “for my father does not love me, Evelyn.”

Evelyn did not answer immediately, and Wyllie went on hastily, and with a sort of suppressed indignation in his manner.

“He despises me, Evelyn—he is ashamed of me. He looks down upon me, I know, because I am a cripple.”

“We cannot dive into other men’s mind, dear Wyllie, with any certainty of being right in our conjectures; and therefore, perhaps, your father’s thoughts about you are very different from those which you imagine. They would be at any rate, I am certain, if he considered for a moment how independent mental and bodily strength are of each other, and how immeasurably superior the first is to the last.”

“Still, Evelyn, strength in a man is a glorious thing! And when I look at Frank, with his firm, strong stride, and proud, determined forehead, I can’t help longing for it.”

“Yes, Wyllie; because in Frank, strength of body is united to strength of mind and purpose. But it is not always thus you know, and there-

fore, Goliath has come down to us in history, as the strong man only, while David will be loved throughout all time as Israel's sweetest minstrel."

"Am I clever, Evelyn?"

"You would be, if you were not idle."

"My idleness comes from illness—doesn't it?"

"Partly, but only partly, Wyllie. Indolence, even when it arises from disease, can be always more or less controlled by reason, and in your case more especially it ought; because if you ever should recover, as we have good reason to expect, the habits acquired on a sick bed will be very prejudicial to your success in the active walks of life."

"The active walks of life," said Wyllie, sighing. "How fresh and strong that sounds, dear Evy; and how I shall exult if ever I am set free!"

"And how I shall exult with you, dear boy," cried Evelyn, her own hopes kindling in the eager gladness of his eyes.

"And, Evy," pursued the boy, "I will exult for you as well as for myself, because I know

now—I begin to understand now—that I may have been a burthen to you as well as to myself.”

“A very light one then,” said Evelyn, smiling, “as far as I am concerned at least; though I will not answer for what you may sometimes have been to yourself, dear Wyllie.”

“Evy,” said the boy, putting his arm round her neck, and hiding his face upon her shoulder, “I am wiser to-day than I was yesterday. I heard what the gipsy said to you in the field, and one or two things besides which the doctor said before that, when you were sitting together in the garden. I did not want to listen, of course you know, but he spoke so loud, I couldn’t help it. And now I know what I never knew before, that I have made you unhappy somehow—”

“No, indeed,” cried Evelyn; “that I do most emphatically deny. You never made me unhappy, Wyllie. Never! excepting when I was anxious about your health.”

“Still there was something or other; I know there was; dear Evelyn, do tell me. I shall be always uncomfortable now if you leave me in this suspense.”

"Well, Wyllie, if I do tell you, I hope it will help to make you contented with your own lot, whatever that lot may prove hereafter. At any rate it will convince you that none of us are without our trials, and that such trials are sent more over quite as abundantly to the strong and healthy, as to the weak and ailing. Wyllie, I was to have been married once, and to one who loved me well."

"And did you love him, Evelyn?"

"I couldn't have married him without, Wyllie; and he deserved my love, for he was good and generous, and noble; but on the other hand my mother was weak, and ailing, and not too happy either. She was uneasy also about you, because you were very delicate, and the doctors thought that you would become yet more so."

"And because my father did not love me, Evelyn?"

"And because she thought only a woman could take a mother's place in your regard," said Evelyn, smiling, as she parried the insinuation conveyed in Wyllie's question.

"And so you would not marry, and you stayed



at home, and all for the sake of a poor, miserable, wretched little cripple of a thing like me, did you, Evelyn?"

"And so I would not marry," she answered, with her quiet smile; "and I staid at home to see a smile on my dying mother's face, and to hear her whisper, that since her little one would have in me a mother, she no longer feared to die. I staid to watch over an innocent, helpless, suffering creature, whom I soon learned to love as a son and a brother all in one; to have with me both night and day the glad thought, that while I soothed his bodily pains, I shared also with his guardian angel in the nobler task of leading him to Heaven; and to look forward to the moment, Wyllie, when the child, becoming conscious of all or anything I had sacrificed for his sake, should give me back the love of a son in return for the wealth of maternal affection I had lavished upon him."

There was a pause; for Wyllie had again hidden his face on his sister's shoulder, and Evelyn knew that he was weeping; but after a little hesitation she continued softly:

“And oh, Wyllie, shall I tell you the moment, which of all others would, I always thought, repay me most entirely for my love and care. It was that, in which, when no longer a child, nor even a boy, but a man, and with all a man’s reluctance to your crippled state, you would yet nerve your will to that highest effort of which the will of man is capable, that effort which, unassisted by Divine grace, no human will could attain to, no human wisdom ever dream of—that heroism which in the eyes of angels, dims the brightest deeds of conquerors, and which would enable you to look with a sad, but resolute soul upon your infirmity, and knowing its extent, and submitting to its necessity, to bend your will to the will of God, and to say, ‘Not mine, but thine be done.’”

The boy sobbed irrepressibly, and Evelyn went on—

“And believe me, Wyllie, when once that word is spoken, and that calm and grand resolution has taken possession of your soul, your life will neither be intolerable to yourself nor useless to your fellow creatures. Those, who possess

most command over themselves and their own passions, are precisely those who exercise most power over others; and the active inside life, has ten thousand times more influence upon the world, than that active outside life for which you are so longing."

"Evelyn! Evelyn!" said Wyllie, looking up with a strong, brave look in his eyes that made his sister's heart leap for joy. "Let this be the moment to repay you if I can, for all your care and sorrow! Dear Evelyn," he continued, winding his arms yet more tightly and lovingly round her neck; "I promise you, from henceforth, and for ever, to be strong and patient. Come what will, I have only to think of all you have given up for me, to be silent for very shame when I am inclined to grumble at my lot."

"And if you do as you say, dear Wyllie, you will have fulfilled my fondest wish and prayer," said his sister, affectionately returning his passionate embrace.

"And you will be happy, Evelyn?"

"Surely; why should you doubt it?"

"I don't know, but still I do. I wish he, who ever he is, would come back."

"And perhaps he will bring a wife and half-a-dozen children with him, Wyllie," said his sister laughing.

"Should you mind that, Evelyn?"

"I don't know, dear Wyllie; I have not thought about it yet."

"But would you like his wife?"

"As my sister, Wyllie."

"And his children?"

"As *his* children."

"I don't want him to come back with a wife and children," said Wyllie, after a moment's pause.

"I want him to come back just as he went, and to marry you, Evy. Do you know if he is married?"

"I have never sought to know, dear Wyllie; for I gave him up entirely, and therefore I thought it my duty not even to ask myself whether I were remembered or forgotten."

"Was he angry with you for refusing him?"

"He was like himself, noble, unselfish, generous, and religious. He admitted the claim

my mother had upon me, and he did not come between us. I have sometimes thought he did not write from the same high principle, that he wished neither to shake me nor disturb me in the duty I had undertaken."

"That was noble!" cried Wyllie. "But oh, dear Evelyn, your heart is so strong and warm! You must have suffered terribly if you loved him."

Even at that distance of time, there was suffering on Evelyn's face as she recalled the past.

"Yes, dear Wyllie, I suffered greatly. Yet I must acknowledge it was in some measure at least, suffering of my own causing, since I never sufficiently tried to check it. Whether through my own fault or not, however, I was more sorrowful than I can tell you; and when our mother died especially, the sense of desolation was overwhelming. I knew so well all that he might, and would have been, to me, in that sad hour, when instead of his deep sympathy and support I had to weep alone—"

"Or to listen to the squeals of a miserable

little rat of a baby," said Wyllie, in a tone of remorse that made his sister laugh.

"Yes, Wyllie; but those squeals as you call them carried comfort to my soul; for they reminded me how sacred was the duty I had undertaken. Still, as I said before, I suffered more than I need have done; because instead of fixing my thoughts entirely upon that duty, I suffered them to wander where they ought not, vexing my spirit, and irritating my heart by counting the long lonely years that lay yet before me, and dwelling I am afraid at times, on all that might otherwise have been my portion."

"I am sure that was very natural, Evelyn."

"Very natural, but not very wise, dear Wyllie, nor very religious either, I am afraid. I had undertaken a duty from motives not natural, but supernatural; and therefore it should have been accomplished not in the weakness of a natural regret, but in the strength of a supernatural purpose."

"And you did not?"

"Not for a long time. Not until one day, (I never shall forget it) I was feeling particularly

wretched and lonely I remember, and I took up the life of St. Ignatius in a sulky sort of way, and went into the conservatory to read it. The book opened accidentally at that part where St. Ignatius being tempted to abandon his penitential way of living, because of the number of years he might have to endure it, overcame the temptation by saying to himself, 'And how do you know that you may live a day?' Wyllie, it seemed like an answer to my own thought; and in the truth of that saying, I took heart. Since that moment I laid down for myself a rule of mental discipline, which I never have since set aside, and which has grown to be a habit with me now. I shut my eyes as much as possible to the past, and resolutely refused to speculate on the future; but above all, I tried to trust implicitly in God, that He would give me daily strength for the daily duties that He sent me. In the morning I implored this of Him; in the evening I thanked Him that it had been given to me. Neither did I refuse, as I had hitherto done, any little gleam of mental sunshine or worldly recreation that presented itself; and so



by degrees the bright side of my soul came uppermost again, and the world went almost as smoothly as it had done before."

"The bright side," repeated Wyllie musing. "But then there is a dark one too, dear Evelyn, and I am so sorry."

"I do not know, dear Wyllie. I never ask myself whether there is or not. God knows and will repay accordingly; and that should be enough for any of us. Only you must believe with a firm, fast faith, that whatever is or has been dark to me, you have it in your power to atone, and more than to atone for it, by your present and future conduct."

There was a sincerity in Evelyn's voice and manner, that left no room for doubt or question; and while she smoothed with the loving touch of a mother's hand the soft curls of his hair, Wyllie laid his head upon her shoulder, and looked with eyes brimful of love and gratitude in hers.

"And I was such a cross, discontented brat, I know," he said, at length, in a half laughing and half repentant manner.

“Poor child,” replied Evelyn, “you were a suffering brat, so it would have been no wonder if you had been a cross one also. But you were not cross, dear Wyllie, after once you had begun to understand the difference between right and wrong; and I have often looked on, very grave indeed, as it may have seemed to you, but still wondering in my heart to see how a little thing like you could curb your temper.”

“I never could when Frederick was in the nursery; that I know,” replied Wyllie. “He used to teaze and mock me so unmercifully—and besides, it was very aggravating, as nurse Taylor used to say, to see him look so strong and happy while I was miserable, and weak, and ailing.”

“Oh,” said Evelyn. “It was precisely about Frederick that I came to speak to you, when you put it out of my head by your sorrowful looks and bodings. Denis searched the fair thro’ and thro’ last night, he says, and could see nothing more of Lily; so we hope after all, that he was mistaken in supposing that she was there at all.”

“And Frederick?” said Wyllie, “Didn’t he see anything of him.”

“He caught a glimpse of some one very like him; but whoever it was, he evidently avoided observation, and Denis couldn’t get another view. But good heavens! Here is Frank and the Doctor with him. Something dreadful surely must have happened!”

They certainly were coming at a pace which justified some apprehensions as to the object of their mission. Evelyn had hardly time to open the window before they were in the room, Frank as pale as death, and the Doctor with looks full of wonder and amazement.

“Good God, Frank!” cried Evelyn. “What is it?”

He wrung her hand with a vehemence, that at another time would have made her shriek for pain.

“Evelyn, she is gone! It is nearly three weeks now, and up to this moment we have not obtained the slightest clue as to where she has absconded.”

## CHAPTER VII.

As our readers will have already guessed, Lily had left her home about a fortnight after the Doctor and his party had departed for Southampton. Unwilling, however, to blazon the fact abroad before it could be considered irretrievable, and never for a moment doubting that her elopement was in consequence of some preconcerted arrangement with Frederick, Mr. Sutherland and Frank had agreed to keep it concealed from the Southampton party, until they had either discovered the fugitive, or received the announcement of her marriage.<sup>3</sup>

The last few weeks had been therefore spent

by them in ceaseless endeavours to discover her place of concealment, but so far, every effort had ended alike in failure; while the obstinate silence which she herself persisted in observing, filled them with most dismal forebodings, as to the nature of the connexion which she had contracted with her cousin.

Nor was this the only shadow which had fallen upon "the Ferns," since Evelyn's departure from that once so bright and beautiful abode. From the moment when Lily's flight had been first discovered, Mrs. Montgomerie (so Frank now told Evelyn), had been as one smitten by a mortal blow. She neither spoke, nor eat, nor slept. Her days were spent in watching for some token from her child, and when night came and brought no tidings with it, then she sank into a sort of stupor from which she only roused herself when daylight once more recalled her to this fever of expectation, in which her life was wasting itself away.

At her age and in her delicate health, such a state of things could not long endure, and on the evening preceding that of Frank's arrival at

Southampton, when both he and his uncle had thought it necessary to acquaint her with their conviction, that Lily had succeeded in putting herself entirely beyond their reach, and that her fate must remain a mystery, until she should choose to reveal it to them herself, the poor mother after one faint effort to address them, for the purpose, as Frank conjectured, of urging another and more stringent search, was suddenly seized by paralysis, and had been laying ever since in a helpless and almost hopeless state. It was this circumstance, in fact, more especially that had brought him to Southampton. He wanted Evelyn to return with him to 'the Ferns,' for he could not bear to see his mother surrounded by hirelings only, in the time of her bitter sorrow. Miss de Burghe was but too happy to undertake the duty which he proposed to her acceptance, and it was therefore resolved, that she and Wyllie should return to town that very day, under the care of the Doctor, while Frank himself was to follow on the next.

Dr. Spencer had acquainted him with the fact of Lily's supposed appearance at the fair

the preceding evening; and Frank's brow had flushed darkly crimson at the bare idea of the possible scenes into which her connexion with Frederick might have introduced his sister. Mr. Sutherland, indeed, had never named, even to him, that knowledge of Frederick's lawless comrades and pursuits which he had obtained from Dick. Pride, the ruling passion of his life, having effectually closed his lips on the fact of his son's degradation.

Nevertheless, in the first moments of agitation consequent on Lily's disappearance, some dark words and hints he had unwittingly let fall; and these had guided Frank to almost as clear a knowledge of the case, as he was himself possessed of. Dr. Spencer's information therefore only strengthened the young man's foregone conclusion, that Frederick was leagued with desperate characters, who might find the best harvest of their fortune in such places of popular amusement as the one in question. And if this, indeed, were true, by what sort of persons was his young sister at this time surrounded, and amid what scenes of vice might she not be moving?



He shuddered as he asked himself the question. Pride and tenderness, however, for Lily's reputation, prevented his even hinting at his suspicions, and contenting himself by assuring Evelyn, as he handed her to the carriage, that whatever he might discover should be scrupulously revealed to her, he returned to his weary search—a search once more destined to be all in vain, since those who were its objects had left Southampton many hours previous to his arrival there.

From the time of her elopement with her cousin, Lily had in fact lived continually on the road, never halting long at any place, and always departing from it in some unforeseen and mysterious manner. This, with the frequent change of name and style adopted by her lover, would have suggested fears to any one possessing the smallest knowledge of the world. But Lily was a perfect child in all such matters, and being ready like any other child, to believe whatever she was told, never for a moment doubted the truth of Frederick's assertion; that these precautions had been adopted for the sole

purpose of shielding her from the pursuit of her own family. Leamington had been the last place at which they had made any stay, and there after a secret interview with some persons who met him by appointment, Frederick suddenly abandoned his intention of going to the west, and started instead for Southampton. He was sulky and ill-tempered all the way; and this, combined with one or two words that escaped him in his moodiness, had suggested to Lily the unpleasant idea that the persons with whom he had been closeted, at Leamington, exercised some mysterious influence over his proceedings, and that he had been sent to Southampton against his will.

This opinion was yet further strengthened by the fact, that on reaching that city, instead of going to one of the first-rate hotels as had been hitherto his custom, he took up his abode instead at a straggling tumble down old-fashioned tavern situated in the oldest and dirtiest part of the town; alleging that his Leamington acquaintance had recommended him to try it. Lily wept and pouted over this indignity in vain. Her lover

was sufficiently out of temper himself to be thoroughly indifferent as to the state of hers; and so far, this was fortunate, for when she found he was deaf to her complaints, she dried her eyes in much less time than such an effort at self-control would have demanded at the Ferns, and applied herself resolutely to the chasing of his gloom. A good dinner greatly assisted her endeavours on his behalf, good wine set the seal upon his recovery; and after he had drank far more than she had ever before imagined any human being could imbibe without intoxication, he proposed that they should amuse themselves, and pass the evening by taking a look at the humours of the fair. He had no fear of meeting any of his own family by doing so. Knowing the invalid habits of his brother, and quite unaware of Dr. Spencer's vigorous upsetting of the old system, it never occurred to him for a moment that even if Evelyn were still at Southampton, (a fact of which Lily doubted) she would have dreamed of exposing Wyllie to the excitement of such a scene, or have thought of going there without him. One glance at Denis, however,

or rather at the invalid chair which Denis drew, made him fully aware of the proximity of his sister; and seizing Lily by the arm he dragged her into the tent without a word, and through it to the other end, where luckily there was an outlet. She also, as Denis fancied, had caught a glimpse of Wyllie and his party; and never had she been so thoroughly awakened to a sense of her own degradation, as at the moment, when she felt Frederick rush forward to shield her instinctively from the presence of her relations, and to hurry her on, she scarce knew whither—scarce cared indeed, so only that he took her far from these, whose bare vicinity had power to bring the blush of shame to her burning brow—the sob of a guilty conscience to her heaving bosom.

She was tongue-tied, however, from very shame; and, alas! he had no word of consolation to offer, as silently and she thought sullenly, he pursued his way amid the various impediments of the fair; until reaching the top of High Street he plunged at once into all the dark intricacies of lanes and narrow passages that lie between

that thoroughfare and the river. There he slackened his pace, and Lily also breathed more freely, for there was little chance of those she fled from, meeting her in such gloomy alleys. Alas! their lines were cast in more pleasant places. They moved among the honorable and well-born of the land, while in lanes like these, and among those who dwelt therein, it seemed all too likely now, that her future lot was cast. And all for what? No wonder she shuddered as she asked herself the question; it was so certain that the answer, whatever it might prove, would be all too late to save her.

Seldom indeed does a woman thoroughly comprehend the length, and depth, and breadth of her own degradation, until she has measured it by the contempt of him, at whose instigation and for whose sake she has incurred it. And it was thus with Lily now. That she was a fallen creature, that she might never again look upon her mother, or lift her eyes to Evelyn's without blushing, she felt bitterly enough already; for there is always something in a woman's breast to convince her of her shame, by whatever sophistry

she may delude herself about her sin. But that Frederick should despise her was a thought that had never even occurred to her for a moment before!

It was a fearful blow! She had relied so implicitly upon his absorbing love, upon his unfailing approbation to bear her through the future trials of the life which she had chosen; and now in his eager and almost as it seemed his intuitive avoidance of their mutual friends, she saw, and for the first time even she suspected, to how low a level she had sunk in his esteem. No wonder that her very soul seemed to die within her as she read her sentence in his averted eyes, and felt that for the future she would be but an object of pity or contempt to him for whom and to whom she had sacrificed all. No wonder that she felt bitter as well as sad, or that forgetting the justice of the sentence in indignation at its rigour, she reached the hotel at last amid feelings far more prone to blame the tempter for having tempted, than to condemn the weakness which had yielded to temptation.

Up to that moment she had, however, sufficient



command over her feelings to remain silent; but no sooner did she find herself in the privacy of her own apartment, than she gave them full vent in a burst of tears and vehement reproaches. Tears, unfortunately, Frederick was well accustomed to already, but reproaches for his conduct towards herself, Lily had never hitherto thought of bestowing on him. Heard thus for the first time, they perhaps moved him for the moment to compunction; at any rate he listened more patiently than was his wont, having taken care to fortify himself against the storm by a couple of glasses of brandy from the sideboard. In fact, he had never before seriously considered the injury which he had done to his hapless cousin. It was only when their unexpected meeting with those, who having once been her friends and companions, his conscience and knowledge of the world assured him could be so no longer, brought it out in glaring colours to his eyes, that he began really to feel compunction on the subject. If Lily had only dispassionately watched him then, she would have seen that now, if ever, was the moment in



which he might be lured to better things—possibly even to the renouncing his present life and returning to the paths of virtue.

But she thought not of him in that first hour of recrimination and upbraiding! She thought but of herself, poor child! In selfishness she had sinned, (by whatever sophistry she had persuaded herself to the contrary) and in selfishness was she now repenting; while with grief and bitterness of soul she weighed the balance of their fortunes, and marked the difference of the position in which their common guilt had placed them.

He, when he chose it, might return to the world, and none of its noblest paths would be closed against him; and she was an outcast from its bosom for ever. He might win back its good opinion, and wrest from it even honour and applause; and she, who had only shared his guilt, who was not perhaps so guilty in the eyes of heaven, since she was the tempted and he the tempter, upon her was the whole retribution of society to fall! She alone the object to be trampled on—the mark for scorn to point at—

and while he would pass on his way unscathed, and scarcely mulcted of the esteem of men; she, like a crushed violet, would be flung aside to w ther unheeded, and despised of all!

Writhing beneath such thoughts as these, Lily, unfortunately for herself, soon passed from tears and scoldings, which were galling enough to Frederick's proud soul already, to taunts that were far more galling still; taunts of all that he once had been, and of all that he meant to be, when in the self-sufficiency of untried youth he had vaunted so loudly of his virtue.

The shaft told home, and told in a way all the more terrible that it was received in silence. For a few moments, Frederick tried to control his passion; but Lily still raved on, and darting forward, he seized her by the hair. Terrified by the action and its suddenness, she looked up. There was that in his face that made her tremble, and extricating herself by a mighty effort from his grasp, she flung herself, face downwards, on the floor. For one brief, but fearful instant, he stood above her, with pale face and lifted hand, as if he would willingly have dashed her into atoms.

It might indeed, be that her very life itself was trembling that hour in the balance; but putting aside the fierce temptation, he shook his clenched fist menacingly in the air, and rushed from the room. Lily no sooner felt herself alone than she burst into tears, and so absorbed was she in her own wild sorrow, that she was unconscious of all things else, until she heard a voice, reproachful but not unkind, of some one near her, saying;—

“Wot ails you, young woman, that you risks rousing the whole house this way, with your screeches and lamentings?”

Lily looked up. A dark, gipsy-looking damsel was standing at her side with full, black eyes fixed curiously upon her. Prudence had never been one of the young girl's cherished virtues; but even if it had been, it could scarcely have competed now with her desire to complain of Frederick, so she answered petulantly, and not quite truly either:

“What ails me, do you say? What ails me, indeed! Haven't I been dragged in spite of myself, to this nasty, vulgar Inn, which, for aught I know, is nothing but a den of thieves;

and can you wonder that you see me weeping?"

"And if indeed it bees so, and there be those in the house as are wot you call 'em; surely you ought to know there is danger in saying it out so boldly," Esther gravely answered.

"If I am?" replied Lily, now really roused to fears, which before she had half affected, "Then of course, I am, or you would not say it so quietly. Oh, misery! misery! why did I ever leave my home? What madness was it brought me hither?"

"Your home! Did you say your home?" cried Esther, in a voice so singularly full of feeling that Lily, who had hardly deigned to look at the intruder before, now dashed aside her scattered tresses and her blinding tears to gaze on her more fully. Heedless of this scrutiny the other went on earnestly:

"Oh, if indeed, you ever had a home, and if there war one, but one within it even, whose heart was beating for you, and whose eye looked kindly on you, and if of your own free choice, you have left that home and them that were a dwelling in

it,—weep, lady, weep—for well you may—a sorrow is on your life that tears ’ull never wash out—a judgment is on your path that sooner or later will crush you in the falling.”

“Who are you?” cried Lily, who, unused at any time to blame, could bear it less than ever now that misery had made her frantic. “Who are you, that dare to threaten me in such fashion.”

“I am one that never left a home,” said Esther solemnly; and there was a pathos in her voice, beneath which even Lily’s angry grief was shamed to silence, “because I never had one! But oh, lady, if so be as I had ever knowed wot it were to have a home, though it were but a cabin by the wayside, or a garret, or a cellar, in the gréat city that I comes from, and if so be as I had ever had a mother, or a father, or any human creetur wotsoever; ah, I had well nigh said any senseless beast; a dumb dog, or a birdie on its perch, for to need my tending and to ask it,—then, lady, I wouldn’t ha’ been beside you now; and if you had left your home, I never would ha’ know’d it, for of my own free would I

never have gone out from mine, for to dwell in such a house as this is."

"A home," cried Lily, bursting into a passionate fit of tears; "yes, indeed, I had a home, and birds, and flowers, and a dog that followed all my footsteps, and a mother too, affectionate, though cold, and a brother that loved me dearly; and now I have left them all; they are gone from me for ever! Oh, fool that I have been, and miserable wretch that I am become! Pariah and outcast from the world for ever!"

More and more, as Esther looked and listened, her heart was learning tenderness and compassion. Used as she was by hard necessity to exercise strong control over her own feelings, Lily's child-like ebullition of passion had in the beginning chiefly excited her contempt, but this feeling gradually softened into pity as she looked at the child-like figure extended on the floor, and listened to the piteous sobs, so like the plainings of an ill-treated child, that burst ever and anon from her panting bosom.

Conscious, however, that every word she had hitherto uttered, had in some way or other



tended rather to excite than to assuage the grief of Lily, it was some time ere she ventured to speak again; and when she did so, it was in a hesitating and uncertain manner.

“Why not go back to that home at once then, if you love it well enough to take on so for having left it? Your pal won’t be back these two hours, I daresay, and you would be half way to Lonon by that time, if you took the train that leaves this by and bye.”

Go back! At the bare suggestion, Lily’s sin stared her in the face again, in all its appalling reality, and she uttered such a cry of agony that Esther recoiled in terror and amazement.

“Go back! go back!” shrieked the wretched girl, sitting upright on the floor, and wildly repeating the words that had so moved her. “And tell me who would receive me now, a guilty and dishonoured thing? Why, my very mother would shrink from my embraces, and my brother spurn me, though I were dying at his feet. Oh, know you not, you who talk so lightly of returning, that the dead may sooner look for welcome from their living friends, than a sin-soiled



woman hope for it in the home of her guiltless childhood."

Half in sorrow, half in wonder, Esther listened to the words of Lily. In fact, she could only in part comprehend the agony that rent the poor child's bosom at that moment. For the street girl had no recollections of a former home to make her present loneliness more appalling; no consciousness of a former state of innocence to deepen the shadows of her present degradation; no bright antecedents of any kind to compare with the life she was leading now; happy in this, at least, that desperate as her portion was, it was free at all events from the bitterness of contrast. Lily's genuine burst of misery, however, had given her an insight into the awfulness of sin such as she had never been before possessed of, and after pondering a little while upon the possible turpitude of that deed, which could compel a mother to disown her child, she bent her eyes on Lily, while in softness and almost in humility, she asked:

"Did I hear you rightly, lady? or sure-lie I was mistaken? You never did—you never could

have meant for to say that your own mother would look coldly on you if you went right home at once and throwed yourself on her bosom?"

"She would give me food and shelter, I suppose," sobbed Lily, "but she would blush to be seen beside me, and if a stranger came, she would be glad to hide me in my grave, so that she might be spared the shame of my presence in her household."

Esther groaned aloud.

"I thought," she continued, after another painful pause, "I thought I had heard it said, that a mother's love could triumph over all."

"Over all but a daughter's shame," Lily murmured in a smothered voice. Then covering her face with her hands, she lapsed into mournful silence, while Esther gazed upon her with a heart too full of sorrow and perplexity to be able to give her the comfort that she needed.

This continued for a little time, but just as the silence was beginning to be oppressive, the door was cautiously unclosed, and putting in his head, Dick beckoned Esther to follow him to the passage. Lily had never moved her hands from

her eyes, so she was unconscious of the interruption.

"Wot is it, then?" asked Esther, with a slight shade of impatience in her manner as she obeyed the summons, carefully closing the door of the room behind her.

"Is the gal better now? I heard her screeching at no rate when I comed by just now."

"Yes, yes, she's quiet enough now, and sad enough, too, poor thing, if that were all," said Esther mournfully. "No great wonder neither, if all as she says is true, which I can't bring myself altogether to believe as yet."

"Quiet, is she?" said Dick, judiciously ignoring every part of this speech except that which jumped with his present purpose. "So much the better, for a whimpering 'ooman were always my awersion. But if she's quiet now, just you step in again and tell her, will ye, to mind her eye and look sharp, for the cove she comed with means to be off next train for Lonon."

"Why now I wonder," said the girl, "I thought he comed down here because the other lay were too hot to hold him."

"All serene," said Dick; "but a cove as knows him has been a dodging of he all through the fair, he tells me, which makes it ill convenient his remaining; and for the same reason I means to cut my own luckie also; so when you've spoke to the young ooman within, you'd best get ready for a start yourself."

"Where's the use now," replied Esther, visibly annoyed by this last piece of intelligence. "I thought you promised Aileen and I a couple of months in the country?"

"Where's the use, indeed?" repeated Dick; "you are sharp enough when you likes it, Esther. Now carn't you see that as all our coves are sailing in the same boat, if the beaks are arter one to-night there is no saying which of us mayn't be under the same complemerment to them to-morrow; therefore I say that if you don't want to see none of us jugged before daylight, you must be ready to start from Southampton in an hour."

Esther nodded her head in token of intelligence, but the fate of Aileen was heavy at her heart, and she was deadly pale as she withdrew.

Dick, on the contrary, walked away carelessly whistling a tune, and inwardly congratulating himself on the facility with which he had contrived to hoodwink the usually keen-eyed Esther as to the actual reason of their departure. He had always carefully concealed Mr. Sutherland's real name as well as his relationship to Frederick from her knowledge, therefore he did not choose to tell her now, that having learned from the latter how Denis had been sent in his search, it had occurred to his own astuteness to fear, lest the emissary instead of discovering Mr. Sutherland's son, might stumble by some mischance upon the child whom Mr. Sutherland had committed to his care.

## CHAPTER VIII.

JIM and Aileen were fast asleep when the train they came by arrived at Vauxhall. They found on waking, that Dick had got out at some previous station, leaving them alone with Esther, who immediately made them enter an omnibus which was plying towards the city. After they had proceeded to some distance in this manner, she stopped the vehicle and descended; consoling the weary children at the same time by the assurance that they would not have far to walk before arriving at their destination. At first the streets were so deserted that it almost seemed as if they were the only living creatures awake

and stirring in the great crowded city. They had not gone far, however, before carts laden with vegetables for the early market began to roll in from the country, and these were soon followed by large droves of cattle of various kinds, which sometimes filled up the whole width of the street, and every now and then, when their weary drivers lagged behind, encroached even on the pavement.

Terrified by these chance encounters, and only half awake besides, Aileen at last began to sob hysterically, and occupied by vain attempts to soothe her fears, Esther never saw or heard a drove of bullocks that were coming pell mell down the street, until she and the children were actually in the midst of them.

Aileen now fairly shrieked aloud, and frightened by her vehemence, Esther caught her in her arms, and turned into a lane close at hand, in order to avoid the animals which had excited the child so strangely. Never doubting, then, that Jim was following close at her heels, instead of stopping quietly until the cattle had passed by, she continued to walk forward to



a considerable distance, trusting to her own knowledge of the locality for enabling her to strike into the direct path again. When she paused at last, she found that she was alone, and in considerable fear and perplexity retraced her steps to the spot where she had left the main street. But not a sign of Jim could she discover on the way, nor did she dare to enquire of the chance passers by, lest she should draw more attention upon Aileen than she knew would have been considered desirable by Dick. The little girl was sobbing so bitterly besides, partly from nervous excitement, partly from her fears and anxieties about Jim, that Esther resolved at last, instead of pursuing her searches further, to go straight on to the tramp house, and to confide to some other of the community, the task of discovering and reclaiming the fugitive.

In the mean time the missing boy was nearly in as sad a state of perplexity as she was herself. Thrown down by the suddenness with which she had darted past him, the cattle were over him before he could find time to rise, and the hoof of one of them striking him on the head, the whole

drove were far on their way to Smithfield before he had recovered from the stunning effects of the blow. When he did come to himself indeed, the street was quite deserted, and it took a considerable time before he could even remember how he had come there at all, or how he had managed to get separated from the rest of his companions. No sooner, however, had he succeeded in recalling to his memory all the particulars of his late adventure, than the poor boy became so possessed with fear lest Dick should come suddenly upon him and punish his unintentional evasion, that scarcely knowing what he was about, he commenced wandering up and down the street, in hopes of falling in with Esther, who would do her best, he felt very certain, to screen him from the brutality of her comrades.

Unluckily, as he would at the time have thought it, he chose quite an opposite direction to that which she had actually taken; and after walking about for some time in a very vacant and purposeless manner, he sat down at last on a door step to ponder sadly on what he should do next.

But he was weary and confused by more than one night's sleepless travel; his head, never very strong at any time, was giddy moreover from his fall, and aching from its concussion with the bullock's hoof. The more, therefore, he tried to think the less was he capable of thinking; past, present, and future all seemed careering in a mad sort of country dance through his brain, and giving up the attempt for the present in despair, he chose one of the steps upon which he was sitting for a pillow, and stretching out the rest of his person on the pavement, in less than a minute was fast asleep. How long he was suffered to remain there in peace he never could exactly tell, but the sun was high in the heavens, and the street was rapidly beginning to fill, when he was roused by the rough grasp of the shop-keeper, whose door way he had thus ventured to desecrate by turning it into a temporary bedroom.

"Young scapegrace!" cried that worthy individual, bestowing upon the terrified boy another and another shake, "why can't you lay a bed at once, I wonder, respectable like and

comfortable, instead of comin' in this ere disgraceful fashion invading people's premises? Here, Jack," he added, addressing his assistant, "you run and fetch me a policeman, will yer, and we'll see if we can't get this young midnight committed for a wagrant."

By this time a little crowd had begun to collect about the door-way, and Jack being a good natured fellow, ventured before obeying his master's commands, to linger a little moment longer, in hopes that some one or other of the spectators would put in a good word for Jim. The poor lad was far too bewildered as yet to be able to speak for himself, but, with his face covered with blood and dirt, and considerably swelled moreover by his recent mis-adventure, he looked most decidedly more like an object for pity than for vengeance. No one, however, thought of putting in such a word as Jack had hoped for, though many a question was addressed to the boy as to the cause of his present unfortunate appearance; but as all the querists spoke at once, and as the shopkeeper continued to shake him so violently, as to create a sort of physical impossibility to

his giving an audible reply, Jim's adventures would probably have terminated for that morning in his being marched off to the next station, if a lady who happened to be passing by, had not chanced to cast a compassionate eye upon him during the brief moment that her steps were impeded by the crowd.

"*Pauvre petit malheureux !* vot for he done?" she asked in broken English of the man who held him.

"Nothing wotever, to say down right bad, marm," cried the good natured Jack, eager to enlist her sympathies in Jim's favour, "only you see we found him a snoozin' on our steps this mornin', which is wot master never can a bear from no one, 'specially from a wagrant."

The lady shook her head with a puzzled air, to indicate that she did not understand; but in the midst of his bewilderment, Jim had by this time recognised her, as the person in whose behalf he once ventured to incur John's anger; and as the grasp of his captor's hand prevented his rushing towards her as he wished, he endeavoured

to attract her attention instead, by saying in most piteous accents :

“ Ah, lady dear, won't your ladyship spake up for me? Sure I'm the boy that wouldn't sell you the rose tree, and so of coorse your ladyship knows that I am honest.”

Though the person whom he addressed evidently did not understand one word in three that he uttered, still it was clear by his manner that he was trying to recall himself to her recollection, and this circumstance rousing her curiosity, she fixed her eyes upon him, until notwithstanding the blood and dirt in which his features were disguised, she recognised him for her honest little champion of the rose tree. Never was a deed of probity more fully or efficiently repaid. In three parts French and one third English, she tried to explain to the shopkeeper her reasons for perfect reliance on the good character of his prisoner, and a young city clerk who was present, good naturedly translating her words to the crowd, poor Jim was unanimously pronounced not guilty, and his captor compelled by the mere force of public opinion,



(rather discontentedly it must be acknowledged) to relinquish his prey.

Beckoning the boy to follow, his benefactress walked on quickly, until at the corner of the next street, she fell in with one of those itinerant vendors of coffee and black dough bread, who are always to be found in London, in similar positions, during the early morning. Before this stall she paused, and taking a shilling from her purse gave it to Jim, making signs that he was to purchase some breakfast with it, and then nodding him a good natured adieu left him to enjoy his meal.

The boy's grateful eyes pursued her until the turning of the street concealed her from his view, and then suddenly remembering his breakfast, the was about to follow the coffee vendor who had moved a few paces on in pursuance of his vocation, when he perceived something glittering on the pavement. It proved to be a small trinket set in diamonds, and never doubting that it had been dropped by his benefactress, when she took out her purse, he rushed after her at once. But the street which he had seen her enter was nearly



empty by the time he reached it, and after going quite down to the further end without even catching a glimpse of any one like her, he was forced to conclude that she must have turned into one of the many other thoroughfares which opened from it on the either side, and that it would be labour lost to pursue her further.

Having come to this conclusion he paused to consider what was to be done next; and taking care not to choose a doorway again for the scene of his meditations, he commenced a strict examination of his prize, in hopes of discovering some name or initials on it, which might lead to a discovery of its owner.

He had hardly even thought of glancing at it before; but now no sooner did it meet his eye—then—oh, wonder of wonder! could it be so indeed? Again, and again, he looked. Surely, there could be no mistake! The blood rushed to his temples—his eyes fairly danced in his head for gladness, and giving up all idea of attempting to discover the lady, he set off at once in another direction, bravely and resolutely determined to find out the tramp-honse at any cost, in order

that he might have the joy of telling Aileen how he had found out that her mother was living still, and was actually in London. Yes, for Jim's faithful heart told him at once, that the blue eyes and golden hair that gleamed on him from the fairy miniature in his hand, could belong to none other than his little loved Aileen. That she who bore that picture so lovingly about her person must be the mother of the stolen child, it never would have occurred to him to doubt, even if he had not been well aware already, that Aileen's mother also was a French woman, totally unacquainted with any language but her own.

Undoubtedly it will occur to certain of our readers, that Jim might have taken many a much wiser course for the accomplishment of his object, than the one that he was now pursuing; that he might, for instance, have put the matter into the hands of the police, and trusted with a safe conscience to their almost omniscient power for the discovery alike of the mother and the child. But, besides, that our poor little hero possessed a very dim idea of the power of the constabulary,

and a very exaggerated one of that of the gang, from whose clutches he had so recently escaped, the events of the last twenty-four hours had thrown his brain (always easily unsettled) into such a fever of excitement, that he was no longer capable of reasoning on the business; or, in fact, of doing more than keeping to the one fixed idea which he had conceived in his own mind, of returning at once to Aileen, and aiding her escape, at whatever risk to himself, from the hands of the wretches who held her captive.

In coming to this generous resolution, (for generous assuredly it was, if it were not wise), though he had sufficiently counted the cost, he had not calculated on the difficulties inseparable from its execution; nor was it until after he had walked through at least a dozen streets, where he never had been before, that the impracticability of his undertaking began to impress itself on his mind. Where, after all, was the tramp-house that he was seeking? or how was he to find it? He had been brought to it by night—he had left it by night—he was utterly ignorant of the part of the city in which it was situate; and, moreover

he would not dare to enquire for it, from anyone whom he might meet with on the way. In his perplexity he slackened his pace, and chancing to fall in with a crowd assembled round a couple of dancing dogs, he lingered a moment, rather to collect his ideas than to watch the performance. Scarcely, however, had he done so, ere feeling the eye of some one in the mob fixed curiously upon him, he looked up to see who the individual might be. There was no mistaking the scowling glance that met his own, and eager as Jim was to discover Aileen, he yet shrunk with no very unnatural reluctance from learning it of John Nightshade.

Half-hoping that he had not been recognised as yet, he resolved to pursue his way at once; but hardly had he cleared the crowd before a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he felt, rather than could be said to know by the actual evidence of his eye-sight, that he and his former tyrant were walking side by side, apparently upon the most amicable terms with each other. In spite of himself, Jim, trembled violently. For aught he knew, the man might intend his

murder; but the first words the latter uttered, though sufficiently coarse and brutal, freed him at any rate from all apprehension of immediate danger.

"So, you managed to hook it, young dung-hill, did you? And pray how many Queen's soldiers and policemen are you bringing to fight your battles for you and to take us into quod? Answer me at once, you brazen faced young villain—answer me, I say, at once."

"I havn't got one at all at all," Jim earnestly responded; "and if you'll believe me, sir, I was jist lookin' for some one to direct me to the tramp house when I met you, because I didn't rightly know the way of it myself."

"Oh, you were looking for the house, were you?" said the other in a musing manner. "Well, my covey, it is no great wonder that you did not find it, because you see, since you were with us in the spring, it has been burnt clean down to the very ground."

"Burnt down! ochone, and where is Aileen gone to, then?" cried Jim, too much taken aback by this intelligence to think even of questioning

its truth; "and me lookin' for her all this blessid mornin' through every street and lane that I could think of, that it was likely they had tuck her to."

"Oh, she's safe enough, never doubt it," said the other with a sneer; "angels like she have wings, you know, and can fly away whenever the notion takes them."

"Wouldn't it be the worreld's wondher, then, if she had escaped as well as meself last night," thought Jim, without, to do him justice, a single regret for the danger, so unnecessary in such a case, into which he had plunged himself for her sake.

He did not dare to put the question directly to John, however, but by way of sounding him on the subject, ventured to ask him humbly:

"If you plaize, sir, I'd like to run up to the ould place for a minute or two this morning, just for ould acquaintance sake, if your honor has no objection."

"Didn't I tell you it was burnt?" replied John, "but if it's the white faced kinchen you are thinking of, you had better follow me now, for



I am going straight on to the place where she has folded up her wings."

Jim expressed himself not only willing but eager to accept this invitation, since in no other way could he hope to discover Aileen. Nevertheless, the other did not see fit to leave him much choice in the matter. He clutched him at once so tightly by the arm as to render escape impossible, and then starting off at a rapid pace, hurried him through street and lane, suburb, field, and bye road, until he landed him safely at last at the old Red House, where Aileen had really arrived some hours before with Esther.

This abode had certainly not been their original destination, but Jim's escape had created a universal panic among such frequenters of the tramp house as had any especial reason for shunning the inquisitions of the law; since it seemed more than likely, from what was known of the missing boy's disposition, that once he had regained his liberty, he would not only complain of his own detention, but of Aileen's also, and thus bring the eye of the police on the whole concern. To provide against any contingency of the kind,



Aileen was despatched at once to the Red House under the care of Esther. Others of the gang dispersed in different directions, and John, who was more deeply implicated in the business, (so far as Jim was concerned,) than any of the others, sallied forth at once, in hopes of recovering his captive before any real mischief had occurred. In this, as we have seen, he was far more successful than he had any reason to expect; and having succeeded in re-entrapping Jim, he resolved to lose sight of him no more, but to keep him close prisoner until after the police enquiry (if there should be one) had blown over, and then to dispose of him in the best way that he could.

What that best way might be, he did not care to ask himself at present, though assuredly, had he been free to follow his own impulses, nothing less than murder would have been their interpretation. Happily, however, for his captive, this was a point of iniquity to which none of the associates of the Red House had attained as yet. Dick, whose devilry having often a spice of good nature in it, had always resolutely set his face

against bloodshed. Feeling therefore, that the force of public opinion would be against him, in any deed of extra violence of which he might be guilty, John was fain to content himself with the stern resolve of wreaking a very sufficient measure of vengeance on his foe, in the shape of what he termed, a jolly good licking, as soon as ever he had him safely stowed away from observation, in the cellar of the old Red-House.

Scarcely, in fact, had the doors of that respectable mansion been opened by Hurdy Gurdy Bill, who, during the present panic had been appointed to the office, in lieu of old Judy, than pushing his prisoner violently into the passage, John exclaimed with an oath so frightful, that we must hold ourselves excused from repeating it in these pages:

“And now, my fine fellow, I’ll teach you what it is to be found peaching on your betters. What do you think of this, and this and that,” he continued, dealing two or three blows about the head and ears of his victim. These, violent and unmeasured as they were, were yet intended by the ruffian as mere preliminaries to the ulti-

mate measure of punishment he would have inflicted, if Jim, worn out by fatigue, fear, incipient fever, and excitement, had not fallen at the third blow, insensible to the ground.

"Down already," cried John in huge disgust at this unwarlike proceeding. "The d—d, cowardly white-livered sneak. Couldn't he stand up and take his licking like a man? Why an infant wouldn't have whimpered over such a feather blow as that."

"Werry likely," observed Bill, who had been an attentive observer of the scene. "But asking your pardon, old cock, I'd rayther not be the infant that you picked such feathers as that for. Why I'm blest if I don't think you've done for him altogether this time, and no mistake about it," he added, as he stooped to examine the prostrate body of Jim.

"Done for him?—not a bit of it," said the other sullenly, "I wish I had, but one don't get rid of such vermin so easy. Here, open that ere door, will you, and I'll carry him to the cellar to come to at his leisure."

Bill did as he was commanded; and seizing

upon Jim, and still expressing the most unlimited disgust at his want of pluck, Nightshade carried him to the underground abode, called by courtesy a cellar, where, flinging him carelessly on a heap of straw, he left him, as he had threatened, to revive at his leisure.

Bill would willingly have lingered with the prisoner a little longer, for there was no cruelty in his nature, and the sight of Jim's disfigured face filled him with compassion; but John called to him from above, and in a voice which he knew better than to disobey, bade him return to his guardianship of the door, and "leave the cowardly whelp to his own devices."

## CHAPTER IX.

THE nature of Bill's charge kept him continually on the alert during the rest of the day, and it was not until the house was shut up for the night, that he found time at last to go in search of Aileen. He found her as he had expected, sitting in a remote corner of the kitchen, apart from all the others, and looking more than usually desolate and lonely, in consequence of Esther's having been obliged to leave her on a summons from Dick Daredevil, who wanted her (she said) for a few days in the city. Bill took a stool directly, and sitting down just opposite to the little girl, waited quietly until she should have

become aware of his presence; but as this did not happen directly, Aileen's eyes being fixed on the ground, he coughed and hemmed a little, by way of more speedily attracting her attention.

"Wot is it then?" he asked, in answer to the questioning glances of the violet-blue eyes that were instantly raised to his, and as instantly withdrawn in the fear of attracting observation.

"Have you heard anything of Jim? Do you think he will come back?"

"Won't he though?" said Bill, in great glee at the intelligence he had to impart, for he knew that Aileen had wept bitterly for the lost boy. "I should think so, rayther! Why bless ee, little queen, he's been in the house these three or four hours at least, and in such a plight too, as will most likely pervent he ever trying to hook it again in a hurry."

"Not dead!" cried Aileen, in terrible alarm! "Oh, Bill, surely, surely! they havn't killed him?"

"Killed him!" repeated Bill with a ridiculous grimace. "Now ain't you a werry, unkind, little jily of the walley for to think we such fools, as to

run the risk of being scragged for a milk-sop like that? One, too, as has done nothing wotever that I knows on agin us."

"Nothing?" replied Aileen, who had been long enough among thieves to understand their language, if she did not use it: "Why Esther told me herself that they thought him a spy, and would punish him severely if they managed to catch him."

"Well, and so they have," said Bill. "John Nightshade has served him out this arternoon, for anything as he has ever done agin us, or may be hasn't; for I don't myself think as he's been at any worse tricks nor giving us the leg. But, as I was saying, John has served him out for *that*, and nothing more will come of it, in course, for though wengeance may be werry sweet, it ain't hardly worth a halter."

"But what did John do to him?" asked Aileen, her tearful eyes fixed anxiously on Bill.

"Wot did he do? Why he jist gave he a thump on his knowledge box, as I raythur think he ain't likely to forget in a hurry. My eye,



wot a blow it was! John's a brute, and I hate him, I do. I know you won't peach on me for saying it, Aileen."

"But he isn't dead, is he?" repeated Aileen, still feeling anxious and fearful on the subject.

"Why, wot a precious little goose you be, to be sure," cried Bill. "Didn't I tell you I left him rewiving. He won't be on his pins, however, for the next six days at the nearest, and we have at least, two jolly plants to come off before then, which the unfortunate little beggar will miss by this haccident," and Bill wound up this speech by a grimace, which he meant to be expressive of his conviction, that Jim would not be rendered absolutely broken hearted by the loss of such a chance as he spoke of.

"Thank God for that, at least," said Aileen, folding her small hands very gravely and piously together.

"Blest if ever I seed sich a queer little body as you!" cried Bill. "I thought you was werry fond of Jim, and that he'd been your reg'lar chum ever since the first night that you seed him."

"So he is, and so he was," cried Aileen eagerly. "But for all that, Bill, I'd rather a thousand times over see him sick, or even dead, than see him become a thief like you."

"Thank ye for the complerment," replied the boy—half mortified, half amused. "So that's all I gets for my pains, arter fighting your battles for you with every cove in the ken since first you come to it. You don't care a brass button about me, the moment a sleek, smooth spoken feller like Jim turns up in the wheel."

"Indeed, but I do care a great deal about you too, for you have been very, very kind to me I'm sure. But, then, Jim is an honest boy, and you are a thief, Bill—and that makes all the difference, you know, between you."

"Oh, that makes all the difference though, do it? Well, I suppose it may with some folk—but as for I," (Bill could not help adding a little reproachfully,) "*I'd* like you all the same, Aileen, wotever you were. And I'm blowed, too, if I don't think I'd like you a precious sight better than I does, if you were a little more, a *werry little* more like one of we, Aileen."

“No, Bill, you would not,” said the little girl with a look and tone of most uncompromising decision. “You may be as bad as you please yourself, but you wouldn’t like me half so well, you wouldn’t like me at all, I think, if I said bad words and picked pockets like the others.”

Bill did not contradict her; for something there was in the rude, wild heart of the untutored boy, that responded to this opinion. Few indeed even of the most abandoned, who do not confess to the virtue that they will not practice, by an attitude of almost involuntary respect in its presence; and it was, in fact, the innocence of Aileen, even more than her pretty face and engaging manners—the innocence that was round her like a halo in the midst of the sin-tainted atmosphere in which she moved, that had won her a sentiment of unconscious veneration, not from Bill alone, but from many of the younger and less hardened members of the community. Some of them would even occasionally repress of their own free will their hideous blasphemies, and hush their ribald speech when the little girl was observed among them.

Bill was consequently silent now, and finding that he did not answer, Aileen almost immediately changed the subject by saying in a low voice :

“ Bill, I must see him.”

“ Wot to do?” said Bill a little rudely.

He was in truth more jealous of Jim than he would have liked to acknowledge, though far too light hearted and good natured to feel really unkind.

“ Won’t I do for your fancy man till he comes round again. Hey, little Queenie, won’t I tho’?”

“ I must see him, and this very night, moreover,” repeated Aileen, as if she either had not heard or had not heeded this reply.

“ Easy enough if your ’art is so set on it, Queenie. The door is locked, to be sure ; but John has left the key on the outside, because it were too heavy for his pocket.”

“ Bill,” said Aileen, “ you need not tell them anything about it, you know, unless, indeed, they ask you.”

“ And if I’m asked, my bird of paradise, wot must I say if I’m asked?”

"Say! why the truth, to be sure, that you think I have gone to see Jim."

"The truth to—be—sure," repeated Bill, mimicking the grave, womanly tone in which she had spoken. "Darn me if I do though! Why it would be as much as that white skin of yours is worth, to say nothing of my own, which ain't may be altogether so lily like to look at, but which has an uncommon objection to strap sarce for all that. So remember wotever you do, I knows nothing wotsomever about it, which werry likely will be the case too," he added with a yawn, "for I am dead beat I am. No great wonder neither, sich a round as that ere fat gent from the city led me, and all for nothing at all arter all, for he had no ticker about him, and I'm blest if his wive were worth a farthing."

And grumbling all the way at the ill usage he had met with, Bill walked off to his lair; never dreaming, to do him justice, that Aileen would have courage to keep her word, and to visit poor Jim in his dungeon cellar. Hardly, however, had he composed himself to sleep, ere a light touch on his arm aroused him, and starting up

he beheld Aileen standing at his side, and looking in the pale moonlight that gleamed through the shutterless window above her head, as white and delicate as the fairy, to whom it was sometimes his good pleasure to compare her.

"Well, wot's the row?" he demanded, vexed at being disturbed even by such a pretty apparition as the one before him.

"Bill," whispered Aileen, heedless of his annoyance, and speaking in that unhesitating manner to which his good nature had accustomed her. "Get up, please, and follow me. I'll wait for you on the outside."

Half cross, half curious, Bill jumped up, shook himself and his garments straight, and then followed to the place where Aileen was standing, as she had promised, just outside the door.

"Bill," she said, scarcely waiting in her eagerness until he had reached her side, "Bill, he must have some water."

"He must wait until mornin to get it then," said Bill doggedly, "I ain't agoin' to that ere old pump at this hour of the night only because of such as he."

“ You must go for me, then, if you will not go for him,” said Aileen earnestly, “ and you must fill the little bucket that hangs outside the kitchen door. They are all asleep,” she added, looking round her rather fearfully. “ So if you only step quietly, they will never hear you ”

“ Cuss me, if you ain’t a re’glar, downright, little, she tyrant, and no mistake,” said Bill scratching his head, and yawning hugely. “ Why can’t he wait like his betters till morning ? ”

“ Because he’ll go mad before that without it. Oh, Bill ! he’s crying out, crying out for water, and he must have it, too, if I go to the pump myself to fetch it.”

While Aileen was speaking, she continued to urge her companion gently forward until they had nearly reached the kitchen, and then as she probably expected, Bill finding he had been coaxed thus far, wound himself up fairly for action, found, and filled the bucket she had indicated with cold water, and set it close by the dirty straw upon which poor Jim was laying.

“ Poor feller ! ain’t he in a reg’lar fix, I wonder now ? ” said Bill, lingering a moment



longer, to contemplate by the light of a straggling moon-beam, the flushed cheek and wandering eye of his quondam companion.

“A reg’lar fix,” he repeated pensively; “but now I thinks of it, little queenie—you can bring a ’orse to the water to-be-sure; but how will you make him drink it?”

“Oh dear!” cried Aileen, glancing wistfully round the bare and blackened walls, in the vain hope that some fragment of a cup or bottle might gladden her sight. “What shall I do? I had quite forgotten that.”

“Wait a bit,” said Bill, who was gradually warming up into something of the same interest which Aileen already felt for her patient.

“Wait a bit, till I see if there ain’t nothing above as will serve your turn.”

And into the dark passage he plunged once more, but only to re-appear in a few minutes with a broken jug, and part of a tallow-candle; which last he proceeded, with many expressions of glee at his own luck in having found it, to light by means of a match-box, that he had likewise purloined from the kitchen.

"See, now," he cried, "If I warn't in luck to pounce on this ere bit of a glim! But, in course, you won't say so, Miss Aileen. In course, you are too proud to acknowledge a obligation from any one as you honors with the hepithet of thief."

"Indeed, Bill, I am very much obliged to you," said Aileen, earnestly; "and so will poor Jim, I am certain, when he knows all you have done for him. But couldn't you get me a bit of a rag to lay on his forehead. It is so burning hot."

"Wather! wather!" moaned poor Jim, as if partly conscious of what she had been saying. "Mother dear! for Christ's sake, some wather."

"You see is thinking of his own home, and his mother, poor fellow," cried Aileen, tears starting to her eyes as she listened. "Do, Bill, do give me a bit of rag to lay wet upon his forehead—mamma often did it when she had a headache."

"Werry sorry, but I never keeps no such loose toggery about me, Miss Aileen. Howsomdever it's a pity you didn't ask me *before* supper," he added, with a comical smile, "for *then* I had

half-a-dozen silk choakers in my pocket, and any or all of them would have been quite at your service."

Aileen could not resist a smile, but it was only a half smile, and she instantly tried to counteract its influence by a grave shake of the head, while she continued to implore him.

"Do, dear Bill—try and find me something or other, won't you?"

This endearing epithet had never yet been applied to Bill in vain, and cunning little Aileen knew it well. So powerfully, indeed, did it work in the present instance, that he instantly contrived to recall to mind a certain lumber room where all sorts of ill-gotten goods were usually stored, until the proper moment had arrived for disposing of them safely. To this place, he at once proceeded, and returning in less time than could have been expected, threw a small cambric handkerchief towards her, triumphantly observing—

"It's a precious sight too small and fine to be of much use to any one, except, in course, a fairy like yourself—but it were the whitest and

cleanest I seed in the lot, and I didn't want to dirty yer fingers, more nor I could help to."

The blood rushed suddenly and violently to Aileen's forehead, as she eagerly seized the proffered gift, and there were tears in her eyes, and a quiver in her voice as she whispered,

"Oh, Bill, where did you find it?"

"In the rag homnibus, to-be-sure. Well, wot is the kinchen arter now, I wonder. I'm blest if she ain't a crying her eyes out."

"It is mine, Bill, it is mine!" sobbed Aileen, through her tears.

"Well, and wot then," said the boy good naturedly. "It's all serene now, and you've got your own agin. My eyes! but it *was* green, not to pick out the mark!"

"They couldn't, Bill—they couldn't," cried Aileen, with a little triumph in her voice. "See, it is printed!" and Bill saw by the light of the tallow candle, that in the middle of the little treasure of embroidered muslin and mechlin lace which Aileen spread out before him, the words "Rosalie de St. Arnoul," were printed in very distinct and indelible letters.

"Mamma, did it that way in joke," continued Aileen softly, "because I worked it all my own self, and because I was so proud of it. She little thought of where I should find it at last, and of all that would have happened before then to her poor, little, lost Rosalie."

This thought woke up all Aileen's long smothered grief, and covering her face with her hands, she wept those quiet, heart-broken tears, that ever betoken the deepest grief of childhood, the grief that is neither alloyed by anger or by fear; while Bill, feeling thoroughly embarrassed between his real sympathy and his awkward consciousness of inability in the art of giving consolation, continued to shift from leg to leg, ever and anon uttering such broken sentences as these,

"Don't now, Aileen—don't now, dearie. Dry your peepers, will you? there's a good little fairy, and if you'll give me back that cussed rag as has made you cry, I'll leave it where I found it, and no one will be the worsen or the wiser for my stoopid diskivery?"

To give up her handkerchief was, however, the

last thing that Aileen desired to do, so she squeezed it all the more tightly between her fingers while she sobbed, "Oh, don't take it away, Bill; do let me have it, I love it so much, it reminds me of mamma."

"And if any of our pals should twig it, wouldn't they make me pay for my precious per-liteness, I wonder," remonstrated the boy, divided between his wish to gratify Aileen, and his not unnatural fear of the possible consequences in such a case to himself.

"But they won't miss it; and they shan't even see it," cried the child, cramming it hastily down into the bosom of her frock. "And if they did, Bill, they should never know where I got it! Not if they tore me with wild horses, they shouldn't."

"I believes you, my lassie," Bill heartily replied. "For there ain't a stauncher-hearted gal for your years atween this and Newcastle; but still, if you puts it on Jim's peepers they'll be sure to twig where you got it."

"Couldn't you get me another for Jim?" asked Aileen, pressing her little treasure yet closer to her bosom.

"'Spose I must, then," said the other, with a roguish look, producing at the same time from his pocket a larger, and for mere mortal use, a far more efficient specimen of what Aileen called a handkerchief, and he a choaker or wipe, according to the use for which it was intended.

"Oh, that is just the thing," cried Aileen. "Where did you get it, Bill?"

"Where I got the other most like," said Bill, putting his tongue in the approved fashion of young pick-pockets into his cheek. "I thought if it were lawful to prig for number two, which is you, you know, it couldn't be altogether so objectionable to do as much for number one—which is I. So while I were a picking up that ere stoopid little bit of nothing at all for you, I just made bold to help myself to a couple of choakers aginst the cold weather set in—reg'lar good'uns they are, too—real cambrics, and no mistake!"

Even in the midst of her doubts and perplexities, Aileen could not resist a smile at this speech; but just then a moan from poor Jim reminding her of her more immediate duties as a



nurse, she seized the handkerchief from Bill, and dipping it into water, laid it at once, with that true, womanly instinct for the alleviation of suffering, which circumstances had caused to be prematurely developed in her case, upon the burning forehead of the sick boy. The sense of relief seemed almost instantaneous, causing something like a smile to play upon Jim's features; and the delighted Aileen turned with eyes grateful and overflowing towards her partner in the good work she had accomplished.

"He likes it, Bill! You see he likes it!" she cried, almost clapping her hands in her childish glee. "And now," she continued, in quite another manner, as the habitual caution acquired by her long residence among enemies gradually resumed its sway upon her mind; "you can do nothing more for him to-night, so you had better go away, for if John catches you and me together here, he will perhaps prevent us from coming again. So good-night, dear Bill, and thank you so much for your kindness to Jim."

"Good-night!" echoed the other, in a tone of surprise. "Why, Aileen, I say, you ain't a goin,

are you, to sit here all the long night through with that poor cove as has no more sense left in his brain pan—than—than—” Bill hesitated for a minute, and then added, “than the himage at the gate of St. Paul’s.”

“Indeed, but I am though,” said Aileen; “for there is no one else to do it, and he would have done as much for me, poor fellow, and more if he could, I am certain. So now do get away, Bill, for you know it will be worse for both of us if you don’t.

“I believe you, my gal! But if I cut my luckie now, because you wish it, never you go ar’terwards for to say, as I wouldn’t ha’ stayed with you, and gladly too, if it hadn’t been altogether dangerous and impossible to attempt it.”

“Indeed, I am quite certain that you would, Bill.”

“And once the day light’s fair-lie in,” continued Bill, “you’d best cut your own stick also, Aileen; for John Nightshade will be sure to come sneaking in, for to see wot is the measure of his ugly fist, against the next time he may ’appen to want it. And lookee, my lassie, I’ve kivered up

the bucket with this 'ere lumber of broken furniter and fire-wood, because it won't do to let John suppose that we two are aiding and abetting (as the judges say) of his wictim for to live."

"I will take care to keep it covered," said the grateful child.

"And, Aileen," added the boy, still lingering a moment longer on the threshold, "if you thinks as you'd like it, I ain't so sure but wot I could find you a bit of candle end longer nor that is."

"Thank you," said Aileen, "but I am sure this will last until daylight. And now go away do, dear Bill, for I think I hear some one stirring over head."

## CHAPTER X.

UNDER Dr. Spencer's vigorous and judicious treatment, Mrs. Montgomerie was soon sufficiently recovered from the mere bodily effects of her seizure to be carried to the drawing room, but her intellect had well nigh departed from her, and faint indeed were the hopes which the doctor gave them, that it ever would be restored. Lily was her only thought, her only care, and of Lily she raved continually, in a way very distressing to the feelings of all the party, but positive agony to those of Frank, inclined perhaps as he was just then, to dwell more on the anguish his sister's conduct had inflicted on her mother than

on the sin and sorrow it had entailed upon herself. Although without much hope of further benefiting the invalid by his advice, the good hearted doctor still positively refused to quit the "Ferns," as Evelyn, aware of his attachment to his own home, more than once urged him to do.

"I tell you I won't," was at last his almost angry reply, "and if you say another word upon the subject, I will consider it a civil form of dismissal, and make my bow. But never to return, Miss Evelyn, mind that; so pray count the cost before you get rid of your medico for ever."

"Nay, then," said Evelyn smiling, "I shall not say another word upon the subject, you may be certain. Indeed, you would give me credit for disinterestedness in urging your departure, if you only knew what a comfort your presence here has been to all of us in general, and to me in particular."

"No doubt of it, my dear," replied the doctor, who was not a man to refuse a compliment when he considered it his due. "Nevertheless, and

though it would be the dearest wish of my heart to give you comfort, you must not flatter yourself that I am staying for your sake only. There is yet another in this family, Miss Evelyn, who may hereafter need support and consolation far more than you do."

"Frank!" cried Evelyn, catching the expressive glance which Dr. Spencer threw towards that individual, as he sauntered slowly past the open window. "I should have thought," she added, "that he would have been the last among us to have asked for comfort."

"And for that very reason he may be the first to need it," said the doctor significantly. "Can't you see, can't you guess how sorely how terribly he may yet be tried, with his pride, his conscience, his refined ideas and intensity of feeling? What will become of him when he comes to measure the depth of guilt into which his sister may have fallen? Mind, I only say may," he added, in answer to the impatient denial of Evelyn's lip and eye. "I only say may, and yet, good Heaven!" he cried, starting from his seat and pacing the room with

rapid footsteps, "when I think of her being in such hands as Frederick's—"

"Frederick is wild, certainly," said Evelyn, interrupting him eagerly; "but, oh! surely he is not, he cannot be so wicked as your words suppose him."

"And why not?" said the doctor, tartly; "or how do you know that he would think it wicked? Haven't I heard him advocate divorce before the beard was well upon his chin? And where is the difference, I wonder, between having a knot untied, or tying a knot that you mean to break?"

"I don't think Frederick ever urged it for its own sake," Evelyn answered softly; "but only because, theoretically speaking, it was unjust that the rich should have a privilege unattainable by the poor."

"Unjust, I believe you, Miss Evelyn. It is unjust. But only think what a world this would be, if the lawless cry for divorce which we hear on every side were once to be justified by the law. How children would multiply in the work-houses! how deserted wives would swarm on the



parish! if it were in the power of every rag-tag and bob-tail who chose it, to help himself to a new wife as soon as he was tired of the old one."

"True," said Evelyn, thoughtfully; "apart even from the morality of the question, I can hardly imagine how there can be two common sense opinions as to the fatal working of such a law."

"The morality of the question!" replied the doctor, scornfully. "Pah!—pah! the men who advocate divorce care little enough for that part of the business; and, after all, why should they? For if it be not against religion to buy divorce as they do at present, why should it be so, to give it gratis, as they want to do in future? Excepting indeed," he added, with a smile, "that there is a sort of poetical justice in the system as it exists just now; for money is so often the only connecting link in marriage, that it seems only fair it should sometimes at least possess the power of severance also."

"But," said Evelyn, willingly abandoning the argument, in order to recur to that new depth of

woe and wretchedness which the doctor's first words had opened on her view; "you do not—oh! surely you cannot think that Frederick has wronged this poor child otherwise than by making her his wife, though that, in his present position would be ruinous enough, God knows."

"Faith! don't I though?" replied the doctor. "For once then, my dear, you are mistaken. This making her his wife is just the very thing that I am afraid Master Frederick has forgotten to do; and I would give a thousand pounds this moment down, only just to see the poor child walk in with her wedding ring on her finger."

"Oh! Doctor, this is too horrible even to think of. It is impossible Frederick could have been such a villain."

"My dear Miss Evelyn," replied the doctor, suddenly dropping the tone of banter, which it was often his pleasure to adopt at moments when he was in reality feeling most intensely; "I do not wish to distress you; but this is a question which you must learn to look at in all its aspects. Therefore it may be as well to ask yourself at once, what was to be expected from a lad, who

with strong passions and precocious intellect had no better or more solid support against temptation, than that vague cant about universal benevolence and morality which it is so much the pleasure of the present age to accept as a substitute for religious culture. Bah! it makes me sick to think of it. Do they not feel themselves, these men of impossible moralities and moral impossibilities, do they not feel themselves that ours is a two-fold nature, and that the good and the bad are for ever fighting furiously within us? And how, I pray you, was this poor, lost boy to find in such a shadowy system a real antidote to his passions? He, who had never been taught that there was a divine law existing expressly for his guidance, a God above him to witness all his actions, an immutable hereafter to reward them or to punish! There, there," cried the doctor, breaking off suddenly in his oration, "I have done now, for I will not have you cry, my dear. Remember, that God often contrives good things out of the evil ones men do; (though not quite in the way some of these fancy moralists suppose,) and so it is that from the

very humiliation to which sin has brought her, the soul sometimes rises to her regeneration. We will hope and pray that it may be so in this case, and in the mean time I will stay here if you will permit me, for I feel certain that I may be wanted yet, though how, to say the truth, I have not the smallest notion. God will teach me in his own good time; and now let us speak of something else, and let alone for the present this unhappy topic."

Evelyn willingly agreed to this proposal; but with her powers of observation thus put in a right direction, a very few days sufficed to convince her that the doctor was probably right in his conjecture, and that Frank did really entertain serious fears as to the nature of the connection which his sister had contracted with Frederick. Not that he ever spoke of his suspicions either to Evelyn or to any one else; he was far too proud for that; but she saw that while he talked much and eagerly on all the common topics of the day, while he affected even a higher tone of spirits than was natural to his disposition, any chance word that reminded him

of the past, any pause even in the conversation that suffered his thoughts to subside into their ordinary channel, was sufficient to call a look of gloom upon his brow, that told ill for the happiness of the mind beneath it. She saw, too, that while he seemed rather to shrink from Mr. Sutherland's society, perhaps, as the father of one who might have wronged his sister, he yet tended his mother in her helpless dotage with a child-like love and tenderness, that often brought tears into Evelyn's eyes. It seemed as if he were not only endeavouring to atone to her in his own person, for the absence of that other child, whose conduct had reduced her to such a pitiable condition; but as if he wished to show to all the world by a double reverence, that no failing of her mental powers could lessen the dignity of his mother in his eyes. Frank had, in fact, had his own suspicions of Lily's possible fate from the beginning, though he had never spoken to any one on the subject; and when at last that suspicion grew almost to certainty in her continued silence, then all at once his efforts for the discovery of his sister ceased. In his pride he

would far rather have felt certain that she had perished than have listened to the tidings of her ruin and degradation; and from the moment that the probability of the latter began to preponderate in his mind, he endeavoured, with all the strength of his strong will to efface her image from it altogether. Henceforth his once loved and petted Lily became as though she had never been in his regard—her name was never heard upon his lips—he never even thought of her when he could help it, and anxious as he was in all things else to soothe and gratify his mother, he never seemed to hear or understand her passionate ravings about her child; her querulous inquiries for her ‘Lily flower.’

Mr. Sutherland fully agreed with his nephew in this line of conduct, and everything that could remind them of the missing girl was by degrees banished from their presence. Her birds were set free, her dog was given away, her room put just in the state in which she had left it, locked up, and Evelyn and the doctor (both as anxious as ever, and as much from principle as affection, to rescue Lily, not from the disgrace, since that



was irremediable, but from the criminality of her position) were compelled, to their infinite discomfort, to see days and weeks pass by, without being permitted to take other steps for her recovery, than such as consisted in the most fervent prayers.

In this state of things it certainly seemed nearly useless for the Doctor to remain, yet still he lingered on; Mr. Sutherland being the only one of the party who did not wish earnestly for his presence, albeit, he perfectly succeeded in concealing this feeling from the others. He had always, in fact, regarded that gentleman as his wife's friend rather than his own; and in any case it would have been impossible for two men so thoroughly dissimilar in all their notions, to have been on more than merely civil terms with each other. Moreover he dreaded the Doctor's superior penetration, and lived in hourly fear of his discovering, that he had another secret, darker even than the possible fate of Lily, weighing on his soul—the secret of poor Aileen's destiny, which every day rendered more liable to detection, and which had begun to haunt his



mind, as hidden crime will ever haunt the mind of the man who commits it. And yet, such slaves do men become to fear, when even one bad deed has put them in its power, his very longing to rid himself of the Doctor's presence, prevented him from accomplishing his wishes. It seemed so probable that the guest thus summarily dismissed, would first imagine a cause for such unwonted rudeness, and then succeed in divining its nature.

Things were in this position at the "Ferns," when, one morning, contrary to his usual custom, Doctor Spencer was absent from the breakfast room, where all the family in deference to Mr. Sutherland's city habits, were in the custom of assembling early.

"How late the Doctor is," said Wyllie, as he took his place at his own little table, which since his return he had always shared with his invalid aunt.

"So late that some of us will wait no longer," observed Evelyn, pouring out Mrs. Montgomerie's tea, while Frank threw down his book in order to cut her bread and butter.

“ Here he comes,” cried Wyllie from the window—“ and Denis with him carrying a bundle of—what is it? A girl, I do believe, and dripping wet besides.” The boy stopped short suddenly—he was frightened, though he scarce knew why!

At this startling announcement, Evelyn looked up—and for one brief moment her eyes met those of Frank—they were burning like lurid torches beneath his ashy brow. “ A girl!” cried Mr. Sutherland, starting up, while Frank sprang to the window, but the Doctor had already opened it from the outside, and Denis entered with his dripping burthen, which he laid carefully on a distant sofa.

“ Lily!” screamed Mrs. Montgomerie, as the inanimate object was borne quickly past her. Evelyn could not speak for very fear, but Mr. Sutherland made one step hastily forward, and then as hastily retreated with a scornful “ pshaw, it’s only an infernal little beggar girl after all ”

“ Ough, and by the powers, if she is infernal,” muttered Denis in a low voice, for he was too much in awe of Mr. Sutherland to express his

disapprobation of this cold-hearted speech in a more open manner. "She's been havin' a dose of cowld wather that would have cooled the ould gentleman himself, if he'd got it. Sure it's dripping wet the crayture is, let alone drowned entirely into the bargain."

"Drowned! Good God!" cried Evelyn, while Mr. Sutherland once more ensconced himself behind his newspaper, and Frank, on the contrary, who had hitherto hung back, at once came forward. "Oh, Wyllie, Wyllie," cried Evelyn, as she knelt down beside the sofa, "only think; it is the poor little cress girl who used to come here in the spring."

"Aye, like enough," replied Dr. Spencer; "let her have a teaspoonful of brandy, Miss Evelyn (Frank rang the bell violently for the restorative recommended), for," continued the doctor, "she was gathering them down yonder in the deep pool near the road, when in she went head foremost, and instead of letting her flounder out again as she had got in, yonder omadhaun must needs jump after to fetch her. As if a drowned child wern't enough on a doctor's

hands, without the care of a rheumatic old fool besides."

"Hear to that now!" ejaculated Denis, "as if he hadn't his own leg in right up to the calf before I could even get down to the wather at all. And didn't I jump in then for no other rayson in life but just this, that if there war to be a rheumatic old fool in the business, I thought it more shutable it should be the man nor the masther."

"As if I were such a donkey!" said his master. "Why I only held my stick to her from the bank, and if you had but waited a moment longer she would have been safe out without giving either of us any trouble at all."

"I am afraid you didn't remember to wait yourself, sir," said Evelyn, pointing to his dripping trousers with a smile.

"I held on by a confounded bramble," said the old man, laughing and reddening up to his bald forehead at having been detected; "and it gave way, like a sullen, sulky Saxon of a bramble as it was, too glad of a chance for tumbling the wretched Celt into deep water. But here comes

the brandy; though I don't think our little patient will need it now, for I see that she is beginning to revive already."

"Then perhaps it would be as well to carry her up-stairs and put her to bed while her clothes are drying," said Evelyn; "and by the time you have changed your own things she will be quite ready for your further advice."

"You are always right, my dear Miss Evelyn. I only wish I had had you for a doctor's assistant in India, and between us we should have done wonders. Bed and a cup of tea will, I hope, put her all to rights in no time, without other aid from the doctor than what her foot, which she has sprained, I am afraid, may require."

Frank instantly and without being asked, took the little girl gently and tenderly in his arms, and, accompanied by Evelyn, carried her upstairs.

The doctor and his servant disappeared at the same time, and muttering something about not being permitted to eat his breakfast in peace, Mr. Sutherland immediately followed their example.

"Lily dead! Lily drowned," moaned poor Mrs. Montgomerie, who had hitherto sat gazing without any apparent consciousness of the real nature of the scene before her; but who no sooner felt herself alone with Wyllie, than yielding to the one idea which it had impressed upon her mind, commenced rocking herself backwards and forwards to the burthen of the same mournful plaining.

"Lily, dead! Lily, drowned! quite dead—quite drowned—and I shall never see her more."

"No, indeed, dear aunt," cried Wyllie, unable to bear that pitiable cry. "It is not Lily, it is only a poor little girl."

"A poor little girl," repeated the old lady. "Then she must have run away from her home, and that was naughty, and no one will pity her but her mother and me—poor little girl."

"She didn't run away," answered Wyllie, trying to make her understand. "She was gathering water-cresses, which she sells afterwards to buy bread for her mother and sisters."

"Bread!" said Mrs. Montgomerie, the word suddenly conveying a new idea to her mind. "Do you think Lily wants bread. Oh, I hope not. I hope not," she added quickly, "for no one would pity her, Wyllie. No one would pity her."

"I would for one, I am sure," said Wyllie, with tears in his eyes, "and—"

"Would you though?" said the poor mother, lowering her voice, "then hush, little Wyllie, and I will tell you a secret. Frank said a hard thing of her once, and I have had it in my mind night and day ever since; but I have never told it to any one till now. He said that she had closed the door herself, and that he would never be the one to open it to her again. He didn't think I heard him, but I did; and it has been like a heavy weight deep down in my heart ever since that day to this."

"That was only just at first, when he was vexed," said Wyllie. "He wouldn't say so now I'm sure."

"Do you think he wouldn't," cried the mother eagerly. "And do you think that supposing



they carried her in here, only just supposing now that they carried her in here drowned, and dripping like that other? do you think he would carry her up stairs gently and lovingly as he did that one?"

"I am sure he would," said Wyllie, stoutly; "and if he didn't, I would, and Evelyn, too, you may be certain, auntie."

"Ah, if she would but come," sighed the mother wearily. "If she would but come! If she were ever so wet and dripping, and they would only let her in, I would fold her to my bosom, and cherish and nurse her just as I did when she was a little one in my arms—my own baby—my lily flower—and you think, then, that Frank would let her in," she added anxiously. "You think so, Wyllie, do you?"

"To be sure he would," said Evelyn, who at that moment re-entered the room with her clear, bright face, and steadfast determination to make the best of all things. "But how is this, dear lady? the bread and butter all untouched, and the tea quite cold!"

"There were no water-cresses," said the in-

valid, her puzzled thoughts reverting to the child up-stairs.

“Precisely! and here is your son coming in with a basketful,” replied Evelyn, catching a glimpse of Frank, who after depositing Lizzy in bed had walked off to the scene of her late adventure, and was now returning from it, with her basket, which had been forgotten, and which almost directly afterwards he laid in triumph on the table.

Evelyn immediately commenced washing the cresses, while Frank cut them up and laid them daintily on the neglected bread and butter. It was pretty indeed to see these two, so opposite in all their feelings and opinions, yet working so eagerly together for the comfort of the invalid; and prettier still, to see Evelyn afterwards kneel down beside her, and coax her with almost more than a daughter’s love and tenderness, to the eating of her breakfast. So at least thought Frank, and after watching her a moment longer, he could not refrain from saying:—

“How good you are, Evelyn.”

“Not half so good as you would be,” cried Evelyn eagerly, looking up: “If! if—”

“If what, dear Evelyn?”

“If you had the same clear faith to guide your actions—the same bright hopes to cheer you to their fulfilment—the same charity or love of God which, while it prompts us to our better deeds, gives them their only real value in His eyes, in this, that it is for His dear sake they have been performed alone.”

“Evelyn,” said Frank hastily. “I cannot argue with you this morning.”

“I don’t want you to argue, Frank. Faith is not, and never has been the fruit of argument, but of lowly prayer alone. A contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise!”

“Aye, when it is contrite and humble,” said Frank moodily. “When it is, Evelyn.”

“When it is,” she answered laughing. She saw with her quick woman’s perception, that his pride shrank from the bare possibility of her guessing how deeply his heart had been seared already by Lily’s conduct, and so thought it best to dismiss the subject for the present, as lightly as she could.

“When it is, Frank;—and in the mean time,

perhaps you will look after the teapot, while I settle your mother to her breakfast. Wyllie dear, I dare say papa is in his study, cannot you manage to scramble so far, just to tell him we are ready for breakfast now. He will be pleased, I am sure, to see you growing so active."

Wyllie took his crutches. Two months ago he would have fainted, really fainted over the exertion, but he had gathered strength wonderfully under the regime of the Doctor, and if, when he returned, there was a flush upon his brow and tears in his clear, blue eyes, it was evidently not fatigue which had called them there.

"What is it, Wyllie?" said his sister, who, accustomed to interpret his slightest looks, guessed at once that his father had rebuffed him.

"He has had his coffee, he says," said Wyllie with a hardly suppressed sob. "And he told me to go about my business, because, amongst us, we have bothered him enough for one while already."

"Never mind," said his sister encouragingly.

"Papa had been kept waiting when he was hungry—and hungry men are—."

"Mere animals, as I know from my own proper experience," said the Doctor, as he returned to the room. "I am hungry enough to eat a little child to my own share, if I had one ready cooked, at this moment. Miss Evelyn, will you be kind enough to come and look after your teapot—that fellow won't leave us a flavour of Bohea to our second cup, to judge by the way he is turning on the water. Wyllie, be so good as to give me the half of that fowl; it will save you the trouble of helping it again. How is my friend, the water rat, up stairs?"

"Very comfortable," said Evelyn. "More so, perhaps, than she has ever been in her life before, and yet fretting her heart out to go back to Mammy."

"She mustn't walk," said the Doctor, hastily. "Tea, not coffee, Miss Evelyn, and if you'll put your little finger in, it will be a saving to your grocer's bill. The child has hurt her foot, and mustn't attempt to walk for a fortnight, at least."

"I will go and order the carriage," said Frank, "and then, Evelyn, if you like to take her back, I will look after Wyllie for the rest of the morning."

"Yes do, Frank," murmured his mother from her distant corner; "her mother will be uneasy; mothers *always are so anxious*."

A look of intense pain crossed Frank's open brow, but he only patted his mother soothingly on the head and left the room.

"What a heart that fellow has," said the doctor, looking after him, "if his pride would only allow it to expand at pleasure. And now, Miss Evelyn, I don't think I can finish the chicken altogether this morning, so if you please we'll adjourn up stairs and look after our patient."

Evelyn's maid met them at the door of the chamber:

"I was just goin' to look for you, Miss; the poor child is fretting sorely because she has hurted her foot, and is afraid it will keep her for a long time from helping her mammy with her living."

"Hut, tut," said the doctor, sitting down beside his patient, and cleverly extricating the little, red foot from beneath the bed clothes; "and pray what sort of a living do you and your mammy contrive to get between you?"

"Wather cresses, your honor. Them and the rags is all we do have to live by."

"Water cresses and rags!" said the doctor. "Humph! a goodly mode of living that, I trow, in this christianized, civilized, progress-raving, belly-starving England. Nay, Missey, I won't hurt you more than I can help it," he added kindly, seeing that the child shrank timidly from his lightest pressure on the suffering ankle. "Miss Evelyn, I think we will try the cold water cure for this; a poultice, or plenty of rags dipt in water will serve the turn as well, and be more convenient besides; if you have a bit of old linen that we can cut up into strips."

"You sell water cresses," said Evelyn, after she had fetched the articles required by the doctor; "but what do you do with the rags, are they also intended for sale?"

"We pick them for the paper men," said



Lizzy, "but it's hot and dusty work it is, and the room do be very close, beca'se we are forced to keep the windy shut all the time. Mother says she has never been the same woman since she tuck up wid the rag trade."

"Likely enough," observed the doctor; "but why shut the windy? I should have thought a little fresh air would have done a deal of good even to the rags themselves, to say nothing of the christians who pick them."

"Mammy shuts the windy beca'se when the wind is high it would blow the rags all to smithereens," the child answered, opening her eyes wide in astonishment at the ignorance displayed by her questioner.

"True for you, my little maid," replied the doctor, laughing. "I never thought of that, I acknowledge, when I recommended fresh air."

"Mother, didn't always pick rags," continued the child, in a plaintive voice, "and she wouldn't be doing it now, if any other work war as handy to be got at."

"What then did she do instead?" asked Evelyn.

“Worked for the bootmakers, Miss, until Jim ran away; but after that, she couldn’t work fast enough, on account of having no one to help her, to say nothin’ of the sickness and loss of sight that was on her besides.”

“Loss of sight, indeed, and how did that happen?” asked the doctor, all his professional zeal awakened at this mention of a “case.”

“Troth meself doesn’t very well know, sir, if it warn’t frettin’ about Jim that may be wakened her eye sight. Howsomdever, she’s got over it finely now (glory be to God for that same!) but for a long while she was next doore to ‘dark’ altogether, and couldn’t crass the street widout one of us to guide her.”

“Very wrong, indeed,” said the doctor; “of course she weakened her eyes by crying. What did she do that for? Silly woman, it couldn’t bring Jim back again.”

“Av coorse not, sir, and so the parish docthor towld her. But for all that, as mother said to him, mothers will cry when anything goes wrong wid the childhre. It’s the nature of ’em, and they can’t help it, no more nor the

bird on the bush can help mournin' for its young ones."

"Confound the parish doctor!" said our worthy friend; thoroughly put out at the bare idea of having been caught in accordance with any such official, and especially one who was resident in London. "On second thoughts, my dear, I believe it is much more likely that it was the rags and water cresses (poor living and hard work, in fact) that injured her eyes, than any amount of crying of which she could have been guilty; and you may tell Monsieur the Parish Doctor so, with my best compliments, whenever you chance to meet him."

"Yis, sir," said the child; not, of course, catching at the real drift of his speech, but perceiving at all events that it was meant to justify her mother. "I knew mammy was right. Mothers must cry, in coorse, whether they will or no when they've the misfortin of losing any of the childhre."

"Of course they must," said Mrs. Montgomerie, who, disturbed and made anxious by the events of the morning, had managed, unperceived by

any one, to make her way into Evelyn's room; "of course they must. Mothers become mothers for nothing on earth but to cry for their little ones. All day long, all day long," she repeated piteously, as she sank into an easy chair, which luckily happened to be close to the door."

Almost at the same moment Frank came running up-stairs to announce the carriage, and caught a glimpse of his mother, half laying, half sitting in the arm chair where she had flung herself, too much exhausted by her unwonted exertion to move a step farther.

"My dear mother," he exclaimed, "what are you doing here? Do let me carry you back to the sitting room."

"Yes, pray do, Mr. Frank," said the doctor, "and after that perhaps you will be good enough to come back and help to bring this young lady to the carriage, for she must not put her foot to the ground for at least a fortnight, if she intends ever to be able to use it properly again. Nay, never you put on a crying face about it," he added kindly, seeing poor Lizzy's eyes fill with tears, "for I promise to visit you every day,

and this good young lady will take care, I am certain, that none of you feed the worse for the adventure."

Frank carried his mother down-stairs, settled her once more on her own particular sofa, and was then just about to leave the room when she called after him in piteous accents:

"Frank, do go out to Lily and tell her to come in. It is getting very late and cold, and I cannot wait here much longer."

Something like a shudder passed through his frame at the strange, sad meaning these words seemed to take in his imagination, but he only said, "Yes, yes, mother;" and hastily left the room.

## CHAPTER XI.

“DID you say it is at number eight, your mother lives?” Evelyn asked as the carriage stopped in Dorset-street, a few yards from Gray’s Buildings; and she sprang out with the intention of seeing the poor woman first, in order to break more gently to her the misfortune that had befallen her child. “Did you say it was at No. 8?”

“Yes, Miss, and ring the attic-bell, if you plaize,” screamed Lizzy; but Evelyn was already at the door of the house in question, where happily unconscious of any difference in the three rusty looking bells that invited her touch, she rang inadvertently at the lowest.

It was answered in a couple of minutes by a tall, raw-boned, surly-looking woman having one child in her arms, and two or three other ragged looking little imps, peeping out from behind her skirts; and staring, of course, with all their might at the unwonted apparition of a lady on their premises. But the mother herself stood with the handle of the half-opened door in her hand, quietly waiting the expression of Evelyn's wishes, but without showing the smallest curiosity to know them, or any desire whatever to forward them where known.

"Can you tell me if a poor woman of the name of Darville lives here?" Evelyn at length collected herself to ask in her softest accents, for she felt instinctively that there was need to deprecate the anger of this woman, whom poverty had too probably rendered pitiless to the deeper poverty of others.

"Attic story—back. You should have rung the upper bell, and she'd have come down herself. I havn't no time to lose in attending on quality, as don't do nothing for me."

And having uttered this pithy observation, the



tall janitress retreated to her own premises, driving her reluctant little ones before her, with a stolid indifference to the evident embarrassment of the visitor, that told more forcibly than many words of the savage recklessness and carelessness of all but self, which is sometimes to be found among the inhabitants of such places; and which, steeling the heart, as it does, to every softer feeling, may be styled the last worst curse that poverty puts upon her victims. And Evelyn was embarrassed. Residing as she did at a certain distance out of London, it had never been her lot to track poverty to those dark dens in which it lies jealously hid from the gaze of the luxurious city that surrounds it. Her knowledge of the poor and their abodes had been hitherto almost entirely confined to those immediately in the neighbourhood of the 'Ferns,' and it was therefore with no very unnatural feeling of timidity, that she commenced the ascent of the creaking staircase, which the woman had indicated with her finger; and which, reeking, filthy, and unwashed as it proved to be, seemed provided with every possible ingredient

that ever invited cholera into the heart of a crowded household.

More than one shaggy head, male or female, as the case might be, was popped out at the doors on the several landing places, as the creaking of the old boards gave notice of the advent of a visitor. No one, however, interfered either to question her progress, or impede it; and she reached the attic-story without any worse alarm than had been occasioned by the apparition of a fierce looking face half-shaved, half-covered by the preparatory lather, which peeped out at the door of the second-floor back, and continued to stare deliberately at her until the turning of the staircase hid her from its scrutiny.

Arrived at last at her destination, Evelyn paused a moment, both to recover breath and to consider to which of the two rooms before her the woman had directed her. The door of each was closed, but from that to the front came the sound of many voices, men, women, and children engaged either in quarreling or noisy lamentation; while in the other, which after a moment's thought she decided to be the one

she wanted, the very stillness of death itself seemed reigning.

Evelyn almost held her breath to listen; yet she could neither catch the sound of a voice, nor detect even the chance movement of a chair to tell her there were human beings alive within. Her first knock too, was apparently unheard, or at all events unnoticed, and it was only after repeating it pretty sharply that a hoarse voice told her to come in. The lock of the door was difficult to manage, but no one came to aid her from the inside. It almost seemed indeed as if the wretched inmates had forgotten in their misery, the most ordinary forms of civilized life, or had laid them wilfully aside; and Evelyn ceased to wonder at it, when having succeeded in effecting her entrance, she stood and looked in sorrow and dismay at the scene which presented itself to her eyes. Of furniture, the room was absolutely guiltless! She might have waited long enough for the moving of a chair, for neither a chair, nor yet a table, nor yet a bed of any kind did that desolate den contain. Yet were there human beings enough within those four bare

walls to call loudly for such luxuries; a mother, and more than half-a-dozen nearly naked children being seated in squalid misery round a heap of rags, placed in the middle of the room. These, the elder children were helping their poor, pale, broken-hearted looking mother to pick and sort according to their different degrees of quality and cleanness; while the youngest, a baby not yet two years of age, having succeeded in nestling himself into the half-empty sack, which had contained them, and finding it the softest bed, save his mother's bosom, that he had known for many months, was sleeping soundly on the remainder.

Evelyn only became aware of all these particulars by degrees, for what with the involuntary tears that filled her eyes, and the dust that rose from the unsavoury looking materials on the floor, she was nearly blinded at first. But long before she recovered her eye-sight, her other senses had compelled her to confess that Lizzy's verdict was only too correct, when she had designated the room as 'close.'

Possibly even a stronger epithet may have

suggested itself to Evelyn; for at the moment when she entered, the rays of an October sun were pouring in hot and brilliant through the thick panes of the carefully shut window, making the dusty cloud that filled the room more distinctly visible to the eye, and increasing the heat and horrors of an atmosphere, already rendered almost unbearable, by the effluvia of a heap of rags unwashed, time soiled, and greasy, just as they had passed from one filthy hand to another, or been picked up in the street or kennel. One or two of the children paused in their occupation to stare at the strange lady, while the others went on with their rag picking as stolidly as if even the insatiable curiosity of childhood had been stifled by want and misery in their bosoms; but the poor mother rose at once, and curtsied to Evelyn with an absence of all hope or asking in her countenance, that told, as words could have hardly done, how all expectation of human aid had entirely departed from her. In fact, it never even occurred to her to imagine that Evelyn had come upon her account at all, and merely supposing she had made a

mistake as to the room she wanted, observed before her visitor had time to speak :

“ May be it’s the room below that your ladyship is looking for—the doore jist undher this one, where the ladies do be often comin.”

“ No,” said Evelyn, “ I think you are the person I came to see; that is to say,—your name is Darville, is it not?”

“ Ochone, my sorrow, but it is, my lady, for a grief and a shame that same name has been to me ever since I bore it. And shure it isn’t my own at all at all, but the poor man’s that dead and gone, for I’m a widdy these three months, and more, my lady; though p’raps your ladyship doesn’t know it.”

“ Yes,” said Evelyn, “ so at least I have understood.”

“ There warn’t a lighter step nor a merrier heart in the wide west of Ireland nor mine was, when I was called Mary Sullivan,” sobbed the poor woman; “ and now see to what he’s brought me wid his dhrink and his evil ways. The childhre half kilt wid cowld an’ hunger, an’ meself a widdy, widout a rag to cover them or



a bit to put into their bellies, or anything but the bare walls we live in, to set betune them and the four winds of Heaven, as your ladyship need only look round in order to sartify for yoursilf."

"Indeed it is all very sad," said Evelyn compassionately; "but still you must try and hope for better things, and I trust when these little ones grow up, they may make your husband's name so respected by their honesty and industry, that it will become as dear to you again as when first you took it for your own. I come from the far west myself, you must know; though I have not been there since I was quite a child."

"Musha, and I might have guessed that same, by the soft word and the kind look that few here do be willin' to give to the widdy and the orphan. It seems quare enough to say it, but an' your ladyship will believe me, there's many a worse sin less hardly punished, nor the sin of bein' poor in this grand, rich city."

"And has the parish done nothing for your relief?" asked Evelyn; who did not at all feel herself called upon to speak in defence of the chief city of the nation.



“Ah! and where ’ud be the use of askin’?” cried the widow, “shure doesn’t your ladyship know already, that all I would git for my pains, would be to be towld they had no call to me at all at all, and that I must be passed on to my own parish by the say-side in Galway.”

“And that would be out of the frying pan into the fire, I suppose,” responded Evelyn, with one of those smiles which act like free masonry on the hearts of the poor.

“’Deed would it, dear lady, jist that. Shure what wid famine, and faver, and ’migratin’ to to Amerikay, there isn’t, may be, so much as one of my own kith and kin left in the parish; and widout friends or work, or the manes to get it, it’s little choice we’d have betune starvation and the workhouse. And I have hard tell (she added after a pause) that workhouses in Ireland are worse nor the Englishers in regard to the separation of the mother and the childhre. As if the good God Almighty had given the soft heart and tindher bosom to the woman, for any mortal thing on earth but the rearin’ of her own.”

“Then all things considered,” replied Evelyn,

“you think you would be better off by remaining where you are?”

“Troth, do I, my lady. For you see, all the neighbours hereabouts know me and respect me too (if it isn’t too proud to say it); so what betune the odd jobs they give me, and the rag thrade, and the girleen’s airnins upon wather cresses, we do contrive to get a livin’ somehow,—a starvin’ one, it’s thrue, but still a livin’.”

“And how many have you got to support by such means?” asked Evelyn, her eye running over the motley group upon the floor, in order to ascertain their number.

“Nine, my lady—but, och, wirra, wirra!” she cried, immediately correcting herself; “shure it’s nine we ought to be, if one, and that the best and dutifullest of them all, hadn’t been lost entirely these six months. Lost! my lady, and whether he’s in his cowl’d grave this day, or whether he is still on the face of God’s earth, myself don’t know, nor any of the neighbours neither,—no more nor your ladyship, nor the babe unborn.”

A pause ensued, broken only by the sobs of

the poor mother, as she wept behind her apron, and an occasional whine from one or two of the elder children, who having been more or less attending to the dialogue, had caught this allusion to their missing brother.

The unobtrusive grief of the poor woman was very sad to witness, but Evelyn knew better than to try to check it. She waited quietly until Mrs. Darville dried her eyes of her own accord, which she had no sooner done, than she went on to apologise for her emotion.

"Shure, it's ashamed of myself I ought to be, for taking on so before your ladyship, but if you'll believe me, my lady, my heart is as heavy for that boy this minute, as heavy as it was the day we lost him. Heavier, in troth, if I may say so, for then there was the chance of his coming back to lighten it, and now that's quite clane gone away, and I have no rest night or day, wid thinkin' what may have happened to him."

"Did he leave you of his own free will?" asked Evelyn.

"Well, my lady, I can't say but what he may have done so, but I don't even know that much

rightly. He'd been working a little while before wid a bad set, he had; though it warn't altogether his fault, poor boy, for shure them as has their bread to get, can't always be asking questions. So whether he war ticed away, or whether he went of his own free will, it's jist exactly what I can't spake to for sartain."

"But you rather incline to the belief, that he was coaxed away, and afterwards prevented from returning."

"If he warn't, my lady, he's done what he never done before, least ways for more nor a day or two at a time," she added, correcting herself. "Why, many's the time his fader, that's dead and gone, (God rest him,) did bate the boy to that degree, that I've wondhered to myself I have, whether wanst he got out of the house, he'd ever darken the doore again. But he always did afther a while, poor lad, for it warn't in him, you see, my lady, to lave his mother and the childhre to starve, and he to the fore to help it."

"And did you never apply to the police to seek him?"

“Ah! and what would I do that for, my lady?” replied the poor woman, with all that visible horror of the police, which belongs to her class in Ireland. “Shure, didn’t I know very well already, that if wanst they got a hould of the matter, they’d be for bringin him into coort for a vagrom, or pickpocket, or one or other of them ugly names, they do be always so willin’ to put on the backs of the poor.”

“Then just at first, perhaps, you thought he might have done something or other of which he was ashamed?”

“Well, my lady, I’ll not decaive you,” replied Mrs. Darville, after an empathic pause. “For it’s the soft word and the thrue heart you have for sartain; and though you mayn’t have been a mother, you can feel for a mother’s throubles all as one as if you war one. Jist at first then as you say, my lady, I did think hardly enough about poor Jim, and troth considerin’ the father he had before him, and the sights he seen, and the things he heard, and the batin, and starvation, and altogether, the only wondher would have been, that he hadn’t done it long ago; if so be as

he had yielded to temptation, and afterwards been ashamed to come home and say so."

"But you do not think so hardly about him now?" asked Evelyn, her thoughts suddenly recurring to the boy whom she had seen in the gipsy's company at Southampton. For the turn of that boy's head, and his features in the partial view she had caught of them, as he lay sleeping in the grass, was recalled in some way or other to her mind by more than one of the young forms around her, as had been the case in a yet more positive and striking manner, that very morning in the person of poor Lizzy.

"I do not, my lady. The boy was always honest and inclined to good, and you might have put him in a shop full of gould, and he wouldn't have so much as looked at it, if he hadn't been bid, and shure why would he now? Haven't I known him as hungry afore, and as cowld and naked afore, and if he didn't do anything to be ashamed of then, it stands to rayson he wouldn't have done it now. So I don't believe he did, my lady; that's God's shure and simple truth; I don't believe it at all at all."



"It certainly seems unlikely," said Evelyn, soothingly. "But you mentioned your little cress-girl just now, and it was precisely about her that I came to speak to you this morning."

Evelyn paused, for a heavy foot on the staircase warned her that the doctor's patience was at last exhausted, and that he was coming himself to the scene of action; in fact, she had only time to add: "She met with a slight accident this morning," before a very determined bang at the door announced the presence of her impatient countryman on the outside.

Poor Mrs. Darville grew a shade whiter, if that were possible, than she had been before, but stunned by the bare announcement of a new misfortune, she neither attempted to reply to Evelyn, nor seemed conscious of the loud summons of the doctor.

"It won't be of the slightest consequence, I assure you," continued Evelyn, shocked at the effect of her communication, and rising herself to admit the visitor. "Her foot is a little lamed, but a few days rest will set it all right again; you may feel quite assured of that."



“A few days!” sighed the widow, with a look of blank dismay, which told too plainly how days of rest in such a household as her own, must she knew be days of famine also. “Well, well,” she added, recovering herself with a stifled sob, “it’s the will of God, it is, and shure He knows best;” and without another word of murmur or lament, she turned to Lizzy, whom the doctor had by this time deposited on the rag-sack, close to little Patsy, now wide awake and staring with all his might at the strange visitors, whom fate had assembled on the premises during his slumbers.

“Is it much hurt, you are, alanna? Arrah how did you do it at all at all?” sighed the poor mother, going down on her knees as she spoke, and taking hold of the bandaged foot in a vacant and hopeless manner.

“She really is not hurt in any way to speak about, my dear madam,” said Dr. Spencer, who always made a point of speaking to the poor with as much respect, to use his own expression, as if they were first cousins to the Queen herself. “A very few days will put your little girl

on her legs again, and in the meantime I must request you not to think of sending for the parish doctor, as I promise myself a great deal of pleasure in attending to this case myself."

"She fell into a pool of water and twisted her ankle," said Evelyn, perceiving that Mrs. Darville had by no means arrived as yet at a full understanding of the case. "That is all, so you must not fret about it more than you can help, and I will take care that you want for nothing until Lizzy is able to get about again. And that reminds me, doctor," she added, turning to that gentleman, "you have forgotten the basket; but never mind, I will go for it myself."

Miss de Burghe had left the room before the doctor could offer any remonstrance; but she was back again in five minutes afterwards with a large basket of provisions, which she had taken care to provide before leaving the "Ferns," for the starving family. These she gave to Mrs. Darville to distribute among the older children, while Patsey she undertook to feed herself, in order that the poor half-starved mother might have sufficient time for her own refreshment.

No sooner, however, did that young gentleman find himself on the knee of the stranger lady, than he went off into such a sturdy roar of terror and dismay, that Evelyn was fain to resign him to the keeping of the widow, who, poor soul, was only too happy to suspend her own meal in order to cram her half-starved nursling with such thick lumps of bread and meat, as neither he nor any of his brethren had ever before enjoyed, excepting perhaps, in the unreal ecstasy of a dream.

“And now,” said Evelyn kindly, rising from the floor, upon which she had been fain to sit during her brief intercourse with Patsey, “we will leave you to your dinner, Mrs. Darville; but we will come again to-morrow, shan’t we, doctor, to see after our little patient?”

“And in the meantime,” observed that gentleman, addressing Mrs. Darville, “you will be so good as to keep the rags round the foot continually moist. Don’t tighten the bandage, whatever you do, and keep the patient, if possible, in a horizontal position. Ah, you’ve no bed, I see,” he added, scanning the room with

such a look of blank surprise, that Evelyn, who had a keen sense of the ridiculous, could hardly forbear smiling, albeit her eyes were still bright with the tears which the misery of the scene before her had caused to overflow.

"They tuck it from undher the dead body of the poor man that's gone," said the widow, as calmly as if it were an ordinary event she was relating; "ever since that, we have slep upon the boordes."

"Upon the boards!" echoed Evelyn and the doctor, in tones, the one of sadness, the other of indignation, as their different dispositions prompted.

"Upon the boordes," the woman repeated, with that voice and manner of strange resignation which is so common among the Irish poor. "But glory be to God, who timpers the wind to the shorn lamb, it has been fine warrem weather ever since, so none of us tuck cowl'd. Not even little Patsey here, though, to be sure, the young rogue always had the best of it, for he is never to say out of my arrms for a minute."

"But is there no one in the house who would

lend you one for the present?" asked Evelyn anxiously.

"The woman below has a spare palliasse she lends at odd times to passengers that do be askin' at late hours for a bed; but God mark your soul to grace, shure she never would let it to the likes of us. Musha agra, never fret yourself for that," she added, seeing the trouble depicted on Evelyn's face, "we'll make Lizzy a very good bed in the rags to-night, and I dare-say to-morrow as well; for it'll take more nor another day, I'm afeard, to pick them and sort them rightly."

"Let us first see if I cannot persuade 'the woman below' to be kind for this once," said Evelyn, with one of her brightest and most hope-inspiring of smiles.

And patting the baby's sturdy head, she ran down-stairs to undertake the negociation, with so quick a step and so good a will, that by the time the doctor could overtake her, he found her deep in examination of the coveted palliasse, which, if none of the best of its kind, was at any rate

better and softer than anything either mother or children had slept on for months.

A little additional payment given in advance—a little good-natured chit chat—and a few smiles from the bright-eyed missionary of mercy, soon settled the business to the satisfaction of all concerned, and the woman promised that in less than half-an-hour, both bed and bedding should be placed at the disposal of her lodger. The latter she was fortunately able to describe as a good, hard working, perfectly sober woman, with the one solitary fault, (and that, alas, in such a case was serious), of an ever increasing inability for the payment of her rent.

Evelyn had other places to go to after leaving Mrs. Darville, and it was nearly dinner time before she and the Doctor returned to the “Ferns.”

“Well,” cried Frank the moment he entered the sitting-room. “What news of our little fish?—or rather of the Doctor’s, since he had the honor of catching it. She is safely deposited in blue water I hope.”



“On the contrary,” replied Evelyn with a smile, “we left her snugly rolled up in a bundle of rags, which, if not exactly her native element, seems at any rate the one to which she is most accustomed. By-the-bye Doctor,” she added, addressing that gentleman, “did you chance to observe the striking resemblance between the cress girl and that boy, whom we saw with the gipsy at Southampton?”

“What boy?—what gipsy?” asked the Doctor, after the manner of one thinking of other things.

“Oh, don’t you remember?” cried Evelyn impatiently. “The gipsy with the marvellous little girl, whom she called her niece. Surely you cannot have forgotten that lovely child, with her dark blue eyes, and hair that looked as if there was a perpetual sunshine woven among its tresses? Don’t you remember now, Doctor?”

Mr. Sutherland looked sharply up from behind the newspaper he was studying, but there was nothing in Evelyn’s face to justify his suspicions, and wishing to hear more, he asked her carelessly:—



“A child! Where did you meet her, Evelyn? —at Southampton?”

“To be sure, I remember now,” cried the Doctor, before Evelyn had time to answer. “She spoke like a foreigner, and I couldn’t get it out of my head, but what she had been stolen. Don’t you remember what a rage Queen Esther was in when I wanted to buy her? It was just after we had met, or fancied that we had met poor Frederick, and that put it nearly out of my head, or I verily believe, if I had remained a few days longer at Southampton, I should have taken more stringent measure for discovering to whom my little catechist (they called her Aileen by the way), really belonged, and what right Queen Esther had to carry her about in her train.”

Mr. Sutherland grew deadly pale, and a strange light filled his eyes, but he spoke no more, though from behind his newspaper he continued to listen anxiously to what was going on among the others.

“The likeness between Lizzy and that boy who was with Esther and the little girl, had occurred to me, even before poor Mrs. Darville told me of

her having lost a son in a most unaccountable manner," continued Evelyn. "Surely, Frank, some steps should be taken towards ascertaining whether the lad was enticed away, as his mother seems to think, or whether he went of his own accord."

"The police are the proper people for that job," said Frank. "What like was the boy you speak of?"

"I can hardly say exactly," said Evelyn. "He was asleep, and his arm partially covered his face; but he was dark and good-looking, and very like Lizzy."

"We must have a clearer description than that," observed Frank. "What says the doctor?"

"The doctor says," replied that gentleman, laughing, "that what with the rose-bud, Aileen, and the dark-eyed houri who acted as her keeper, he was by no means in a condition to observe anything else. However, now you remind me of it, I have some recollections of a boy, dark-haired certainly, but by no means so good-looking (to my taste at least) as Miss Evelyn fancies,

who was with the party of ruffians that drove us so ignominiously from the field."

"Oh, that was the other," cried Evelyn. "The boy *I* mean, was laying under the hawthorn, on the other side of Queen Esther."

"The other," cried the doctor, taking a very long pinch of snuff. "Well, if there was another boy, all I can say is, that there must have been an universal resurrection that day, of all the children that have ever been stolen or otherwise maltreated, since the days of King Herod."

"Frank," said Evelyn, after a moment's pause. "Did I not hear you say this morning that you would have to go out after dinner to-day?"

"I promised to meet a man in the city on business. It's well you reminded me, Evelyn, I had almost forgotten."

"Would it be very much out of your way just to call at Grey's Buildings, and question this poor woman concerning her boy? I daresay you will be able to get at the truth much better than I could."

"Certainly, I will do it with pleasure," said Frank. "What did you say is the number?"

“No. 8; and mind you pull the upper bell,” replied Evelyn, remembering her own rebuff from the denizen of the kitchen.

“And don’t forget to ask for Lily,” chimed in his mother, never alive to what was passing around her, but when there was question of seeking for some one.

Mr. Sutherland suddenly quitted the room, and when after dinner Frank set forth to execute Evelyn’s commission and his own, his uncle proposed to go part of the way with him, in order as he said to post a letter. He was back in about a couple of hours, but not so Frank. Tea time came, and then his mother’s hour for retiring to bed, and then that of the rest of the family, and still he had not returned. Mr. Sutherland took his candle and walked off, and at last Evelyn yielded to the doctor’s entreaties, so far as to retreat to her own room likewise. But not to bed—her mind was too much oppressed by strange misgivings for repose. It was unlike Frank to be out at that hour at all; it was still more unlike him to be out at this especial time, when care and sorrow were making such sad

havoc in the household, and so with a thousand vague fancies, and scarcely understood anxieties thronging through her brain, she sat by her own fire-side until long past midnight, when at length she heard the hall-door open, and Frank's rapid footsteps passing to the drawing-room.

For a little time she waited patiently, expecting that he would come up directly, and that she could speak to him on his way to his room; but in this she was mistaken, and after a quarter of an hour of almost unbearable suspense, she went down to seek him. He was seated with his feet upon the fender, and his eyes fixed intently on the dying embers; but when she put her hand on his shoulder he looked up, and said abruptly—

“ Evelyn, I have seen her !”

She almost dropped the candle in her surprise.

“ Good God, Frank !—and where ?”

“ In the street—under the lamp-post, Evelyn.” Frank answered with a frightful emphasis on the words.

“ Oh, Frank,” cried Evelyn, stung for the sake of Lily beyond all power of keeping silence.

“Where was your manhood? Where was your mercy? Why did you not compel her to come back?”

“Evelyn,” cried the young man, starting to his feet with flashing eye and cheek on fire: “I scorn to deceive you. I failed precisely how and where you said I should—I failed.”

“You failed,” repeated Evelyn, scarce conscious of the words she uttered.

“I failed. Her destroyer was at a little distance—every evil passion which before I thought I held in mastery, raged at that moment within my bosom. Pride, anger, hatred, and revenge! Evelyn! could I have overtaken him at that moment, son though he be of a man whom I love as my own father—I would have killed him on the spot.”

“But you did not?” repeated Evelyn, speaking with difficulty through her whitened lips.

“I missed him in some of those confounded alleys. I am glad of it now, Evelyn,” he continued after a fearful pause; “but at the moment I could have shot myself for my stupidity in letting him escape me.”

“And what about, Lily?”

Evelyn had hardly strength to ask the question.

Frank passed his hand rapidly across his brow.

“When I returned to the place where I had left her—she was gone,” he answered after a moment of moody silence.

“And that is all, Frank?”

“All, Evelyn, excepting that I leave this house to-morrow. Nay, urge me not,” he added, seeing she was about to speak, “I know all you would say about it. I have said it all to myself already, but with such a feeling as I have discovered in my heart against his son, I cannot with any pretensions to honor or delicacy remain an instant longer than I can help it, an inmate of my uncle’s house. It is not a new idea to me,” he continued rapidly; as if anxious to say all that he had to say at once upon the subject. “Over and over again I have asked myself, if I were master of my own feelings in this most wretched business—and I thought I was—I deemed myself stronger—but I know better now,



and to-morrow I will tell my uncle the whole truth! He will understand me, I am certain, and then I will return once more to the profession which I only abandoned for my mother's sake, and will eat the bread of idleness no longer."

"Then we are never to see you again, I suppose?" she asked him mournfully.

"Evelyn, how can you so mistake me? Every day, on the contrary, I will be here to see my mother, and in the hours of my necessary absence, I confide her," he added, taking Evelyn's hand and folding it earnestly between both his own. "I confide her to the love and care of the only woman who has ever approached that ideal of perfection, to which, under certain conditions, I have always held the human heart to be capable of attaining."

"And, Lily?" faltered Evelyn. "Will you not seek to reclaim her, now that you know she is in London?"

Frank stiffened at once, and his brow grew dark at the bare mention of his sister's name, but at last he said:

“It shall be my business. But, Evelyn,” he continued in a voice of terrible emotion. “If I find her in the society of her destroyer, I cannot, and will not answer for the consequences.”

The tone in which these few emphatic words were uttered, made Evelyn’s blood run cold. For a moment, she stood like one paralysed by her fear; but then recovering herself, she put both her hands again in both of Frank’s, and looking full in his face, said solemnly :

“Frank, you have given your mother to my care, and henceforth she shall be to me as if she were my own. But, oh, remember it is no mean price which I ask of you in return. I put Frederick’s life and safety in your hands. It is a great trust I know; but I am certain also that you are equal to it.”

“Evelyn, after this night’s events, I dare not promise,” Frank answered after a gloomy pause. “But on this at least you may rely, that for your sake and my uncle’s, I will fly from all temptation.”

## CHAPTER XII.

It will be needful now to go back a little, in order to give some particulars of that meeting with Lily, which Frank had mentioned in so cursory a manner to Evelyn. On parting from Mr. Sutherland, at the post office, he went at once to Grey's Buildings, and finding the door of the house to which he had been directed open, walked in without the preliminary ceremony of ringing at the bell. The door of Mrs. Darville's room was partly open, and on arriving there he found to his great satisfaction, that by keeping within the shadow of the threshold, he could examine the chamber and its inmates without much fear

of being discovered in his turn. Like many other English people, Frank always entertained a sort of unacknowledged doubt in his own mind as to the habits of the Irish poor—an unavowed conviction that if they were starving it was only because they would not work; and that if they asked for charity, it was only that they might drink it. This feeling made him doubly glad of an opportunity of observing them in their own haunts, before they had had time to get up a stage effect for the benefit of a stranger.

A rushlight which was burning on the floor greatly assisted his observations, enabling him to discover the shaggy heads of the children as they lay huddled together upon the paliasse which Evelyn's charity had procured them, and at the same time giving him a view of their mother also, as with her back full upon the door, she knelt beside them, apparently engaged in prayer. This she performed earnestly and aloud, as is the custom of her people; and he would certainly have suspected her of doing it for effect, if she had either expected him to come, or there had been the slightest possibility of her

supposing that he would. As it was, in his immeasurable contempt for what he called superstition, he listened with a withering smile upon his lip, to various exclamations, ridiculous enough perhaps in their mode of utterance, but made beautiful by the spirit of devotion which prompted and breathed through them, until in the very climax probably of her gratitude for the relief she had received that day, she threw her hands above her head, clasped them with a sound which told like a blow on the listener's startled ear, and crying out "Oh, blessed Jusus, it is too much entirely—too much—" fell face downwards on the coverlet where her little ones were sleeping, and burst into tears. Then, indeed the smile vanished from his lip, for his own heart had leaped up in answer to the mother's cry of joy, and he felt as if it were an evil thing to mock, and as if only an evil spirit could have suggested mockery of the world of gratitude and love which that broken ejaculation had revealed. Satisfied, at any rate, that she was not acting, he lingered good naturedly a few minutes longer in the shadow of the door-way, in order to give

her time to recover her emotion, and then stepping quietly into the room, laid his hand upon her shoulder. In a moment she was on her feet, and carefully dusting one of the low settle-stools which by virtue of Evelyn's donation had found their way into her abode with the bed that morning, she presented it to her visitor. Frank would have infinitely preferred standing, but finding that she obstinately refused to sit so long as he remained upon his feet, he accepted the proffered accommodation, and making her take another for herself, plunged at once into conversation by rather abruptly asking:

“How the little girl went on?”

“Is it Lizzy, your honor manes? Musha, but she's doin finely, thanks be to God, and the good jantleman that bound up her fut, and the sweet lady that wasn't too proud to bring her home in her own carriage. And sure it's the lucky fall it was for her and for us all, your honor; for the great God He knows, it's dyin of cowl'd and hunger they'd have been by this time, if he hadn't sent the kind young lady to us. May the saints receive her some day to glory.”

"She found you in sad distress, she told me," observed Frank, anxious to lead the conversation towards the subject of the missing boy, but afraid of putting her on her guard by introducing it too suddenly.

"Thru for you, sir,—but then your honor knows that God is over all, and it is most often when we are at the worst that He shows His face to help us."

"So you think it was God threw your child into the water, in order that Miss de Burghe might come to your assistance," replied Frank, with an involuntary sneer at the poor woman's superstition, as he called it.

"I do not, sir," she answered composedly. "But what I do think is jist this, that it was God gave the young lady the soft heart and tindher feelin's that (the Lord look down upon her) she has for sartain, and Lizzy's fall was the manes he tuck to make our misery beknownst to her and the good jantleman that came with her."

"But He might have managed all that in a different manner," observed Frank.



“Troth might He, your honour. Shure hasn’t He a thousand ways, and no one of them all impossible to Him?”

“But I mean,” persisted Frank, who was curious to ascertain the tone of thought which religion would impart to the mind of this uneducated woman: “I mean, that He might have chosen a way rather less disagreeable and dangerous to your child, for had she fallen into the pool a little lower down the road, she would probably have been drowned.”

“He might, your honor—but then He didn’t,” she answered with a grave composure that almost gave her words the semblance of rebuke. “But sure He knows best whether it’s the north wind or the south that should blow upon our heads; and it’s not for us poor sinful craythures to grumble at the manes, when the end either in this world or the next, is intinded for our good.”

“And, supposing Lizzy had been drowned after all,” urged Frank, half ashamed of tampering with her simple faith, and yet curious to see how far it would lead her. “Would you not have thought Him a cruel God to choose such a

means as that, when according to your own belief, there are so many others that He might have chosen?"

"I would not, sir. And may the Lord forgive you, for only sayin sich a hard word as that about Him. Not but what it would have been a weary day to me, if any thing had happened to poor Lizzy, for my heart is wid the childre—why wouldn't it? or who have they got to look to, if it isn't to their mother? Still an' all, if the young lady had brought her to me dead, and dhrowned as you say she might have been, I would have said, 'Glory be to God,' all the same, for I would have felt as sartain as I am that your honour is sitting there forenint me, that if the Lord tuck her so airly from me, it would have been only to receive her into glory wid Himself and His blessed mother."

"And you really believe in all that trash?" it was upon Frank's lips to say, but yet he did not. Something in fact deeper even than that contemptuous thought was springing up within his heart just then, and responding, spite of all his intellectuality and pride, spite even of himself

and his own strong will, to the faith of that unlettered woman, and to the intense beauty of a creed, which, by giving her a future full of hope to atone for the harsh realities of the present, enabled her, poor and trampled daughter as she was of this low earth of ours, to lift her eyes beyond, and without any sense of incongruity, to behold in spirit her ragged offspring among the princes of the sky.

A long pause ensued; for he was struggling with these unwonted and unwished-for notions, while something in his tone and manner had jarred so painfully upon her religious feelings, that she did not care to speak again, until he should have either replied to her last observation, or adverted to the real object of his visit. This he was just about to do, when there rose a sound of wailing from some other part of the building, which gradually increased in volume and intensity, until it seemed to fill even the room they sat in. He turned to the widow for an explanation.

"The gorsoon that died next doore—it's wakin' him, they are," she answered quietly.

“Poor fellow,” replied Frank, his eye wandering mechanically over the garret where he found himself, while a chill went through him at the bare idea of sickness and death being added to the desolation that he saw everywhere around him; “poor fellow! Sickness must be terrible, indeed, when it is added to the every day miseries of the poor.”

“Troth, and you may well say that, your honor. The boy that’s cowl’d in his coffin this night was the only support that his family had to look to, and the Lord Almighty only knows how they are to make shift widout him.”

“Poor creatures! Is the mother, then, a widow?”

“Ough, no, your honor. The father is to the fore still, and a dacent, hard working sort of a man he is too, but he hurted his head next Christmas come twelvemonth it will be, wid a bad fall that he had (it’s a bricklayer he is, your honor, by thrade), and since then he’s never been able to get up a ladder by rayson of a giddiness that do come over him at times. So he’s been

forced to take to a crassin for his livelihood instead."

"And he don't gain too much by that, I imagine," replied Frank; remembering the many times he had seen the street sweeper refused a penny, by those who were profiting of his labours to walk clean shod over dirty pavements.

"Sorra much he makes at all, at all, your honor; whiles a penny, maybe; whiles a sixpence; as the days do happen to be wet or fair. But little or much, five childhre are to be kep alive upon it, not to spake of the man himself and the woman with a sucking baby at the breast."

"And to-day they are starving, with death beneath their roof," said her horror stricken listener. "Is there no one to look after them?"

"To-day, glory be to God, they are not to say that bad off that they war yesterday," replied the widow; "for shure the young lady (may the Heavens be her bed some day in glory!) left me vittles enough for twiced our number, and money besides, so that I was able to give the poor craytures a good belly full for wanst, and Father

Mick, he gev them a couple of testers also, which will keep them well enough, plaize God, until after the berryin is over to-morrow."

There was a simplicity in the way in which the poor woman spoke of her own donation that struck Frank greatly. Evidently she felt she had done the commonest thing in the world, a thing quite undeserving either of reward or praise. Common enough, in fact, such deeds of charity are among the class to which she belonged; for no people sympathise so truly with each other as do the Irish poor; and it would be rare indeed to find an instance, where any individual of that suffering community ever refused to share a meal (albeit his only one) with any whom he considered more destitute than himself.

Frank, however, was by no means aware of this peculiarity, and he could not refrain from saying in a tone, half of doubt and half of admiration.

"And poor as you are yourself, do you mean to say that you divided your own scanty store to-day with them?"

“ Ah, then, and why wouldn't I, your honor? And who's to help the poor if they don't help one another, I wondher? Musha, but it's little enough they'd get, if they did be always waitin' until the fine folk came to their assistance. And afther all,” she added, fixing her eyes on Frank with an instinctive consciousness that her next sentence would contain an idea unpalatable to him, “ afther all, isn't God above to see to all; and if I help the poor neighbour what I can to-day, wouldn't it be only like Him to send some one to help me and the childhre in our turn to-morrow !”

“ And if He doesn't?” Frank could not forbear asking, with a contemptuous expression of lip and eye.

“ And if He doesn't,” repeated the poor woman with an involuntary exhibition of pettishness at this continual recurrence of, to her, most strange and chilling doubt; “ and if He doesn't, sure doesn't He know best, and so where's the use of talking? Wouldn't it be the black day for the poor, the day they could think He had forgotten them; and how would we bear hunger and cowld and bitin’



poverty, as, God help us, we are so often forced to do, if we didn't feel sartain sure that He knows the sorrow that's in our hearts, and aither in this worreld or the next will give it back to us in joy."

"And why not in this one?" suggested Frank.

"Beca'se He knows best," the woman answered almost sternly. "And what are we, poor, ignorant, sinful craytures that we are, to daur for to say a word against it?"

Even as she was speaking the withering nature of his own belief was forced again in his own despite upon Frank's attention. He could not but feel that it would indeed be a terrible thing to rob the poor of that grand idea of eternity by which and in which alone the equal rights of man are vindicated and enforced; and by which, and in which alone, spite of the difference of rank, and the disparity of mental culture, the beggar may measure himself with the King—his equal by the rights of the immortal soul, his superior possibly in the sight of God by the rights of a superior virtue. He

was not a man, however, to be scared from an opinion merely because it might cost something to maintain it; but fortunately if he remained unshaken in his own belief, he saw no reason why he should inflict it upon others; and ceased to pursue a subject which he felt might deprive the poor creature whom he had come to visit, of the only earthly comfort she was possessed of, without substituting anything better or half so consoling in its place.

“Was that Father Mick, as you call him, that I met just as I was coming to the door?” he asked, by way of changing the conversation.

“Like enough, your honor,” the widow answered, evidently relieved by the change of subject. “For wherever sickness and sorrow is to be met with in the parish, there will Father Mick be always in the midst of it, wid the kind word for every one, and the sixpence for the poorest, though his own dinner do be often wantin’ for that same, as the housekeeper towld me the other day. The Lord reward him with a crown of everlastin’ glory for his charity to the poor.”

And again Frank’s conscience twitched him

for the feeling of proud contempt with which he had eyed Father Mick in passing; the rev. gentleman's frank, rosy, and joyous mien having in fact, suggested ideas of a jolly cupboard and easy life, very incompatible with his real habits, as they were thus incidentally revealed by the widow. It did not occur to him, that had the rev. father been the very opposite to that which he actually was in his personal appearance, he would still have found cause for suspicion and dislike, and that in the grave, thin, sad-eyed ecclesiastic, he would have discovered an ambitious, hypocritical, and designing churchman, just as in Father Mick, who was the very antipodes of all this, he had pictured to himself one, sensual and self-seeking. So difficult is it for even the best intentioned man, to see either things or human beings in any other light than that, which his own pet prejudice casts upon the object!

“And did you never tell this rev. gentleman, who, you say, is so good and kind, of the loss of your poor boy?” he asked, feeling that his visit had been too long already, and that it was high time to advert to its real object.

“ I did not, sir. For I don’t know, Father Mick barrin’ by hearsay, and seein’ him at the altar. But I did tell my own director, and he made some enquiries at the time which came to nothin’ in the end. So when he died, Lord rest his sowl, some months ago, I resolved, for a rayson I had, not to let on to any one else, that I was unaisy about the boy at all, but just left the neighbours to think that he was somewhere in sarvice.”

“ Because you were afraid of the consequence of the enquiry to your child? But the young lady told me you had changed your opinion as to the cause of his absence. Had you any particular reason for doing so?”

“ I had, sir,—for a few days ago (this day se’nnight it was), I met a boy by accident as knew my poor Jim, and he towld me he seen him the first day he was missed, a walkin’ with John Nightshade, (the forester he had worked with, your honor), and he, John I mane, had a fast holdt of him by the showlders, and was pullin’ him along like, as if he war unwillin’ to go wid him. The boy that seen them has been

costermongering ever since in the counthry, or I'd have hard it long ago, but he watched them, he says, till they turned sharp round a corner, and there he lost sight of them altogether. So the Lord God in heaven only knows what that black villain done to the poor gorsoon that night, or whether it was for the ruination of his body or sowl that he 'ticed him so far."

"Was it very late when the boy met them in this manner," asked Frank, rousing up eagerly at a tale that sounded very like murder.

"Not so late, as dark like," replied the widow. "The airly spring days do close in so soon in this black city, as your honor no doubt knows already."

"This must be looked to, my good woman, and that without loss of time, too—too much unfortunately has been suffered to elapse already. What like did you say your boy was?"

"Very like the girleen that your honor may be seen this mornin' wid the young lady," replied the widow. "Dark hair and blue eyes that I've hard tell, isn't often to be met wid together out of Ireland—and he warn't to say, that tall for

his age—but strong enough and likely enough to look at for all that, though it's his mother that says it, why wouldn't I? and he not to the fore to say it for himself?"

"Very well," replied Frank, noting down these particulars in his pocket book. "I will speak to the police this very evening; but I must not deceive you my poor friend, the business has an ugly look altogether, and I would not have you too sanguine in your expectations."

"Ah, sir. Ah, your honor," cried the poor woman, struck by the expression of Frank's countenance, and clasping her hands fearfully together, "you don't mane to say—sure you can't mane to say, that you think he has been made away wid altogether?"

Frank was silent. He thought in fact all that she besought him not to think; but he could not bring himself to say so to her.

"The thought has often come to my own self of late," sobbed the poor woman sadly; "and whiles I seem to see him in my sleep, bleedin' and dyin' of a bad wound, may be, or screechin' to me to help him. But shure I always waken to

find it's only a bad dhrame that's troubled me, and wirra, wirra, but a bad dhrame it must be, and nothin' more, for it can't be true," she continued, struggling to fight off the fear and anxiety that really beset her; "shure it can't be true, your honor, that the boy so keen and full of life when last I seen him, is lyin' bloody and cowl'd in his grave this minit."

"You must not fret," replied Frank, who, with one of the warmest and most feeling of human hearts beating within his bosom, was yet often driven by the nature of his creed or non-creed to very frigid and common-place topics of consolation; "life is no great boon, believe me, to the happiest, and to him, poor fellow, with want and misery for ever on his path, it must have been of still less value. Perhaps even of no value at all, which seems more likely still."

"Of no great value! Is it a christian you are to say it?" cried the woman, now really indignant, even more than astonished. "Of no great value! Shure isn't the price of heaven in his life all as one as it is in your honor's, yerra!



or in the proudest of the quality that do be drivin' through the city!"

"The price of Heaven!" repeated Frank, more bewildered now than ever.

"Wasn't it given him to get there," she continued earnestly, and almost vehemently; "and isn't that the only raal value of life even to the rich man, let alone the poor one? And why then wouldn't we set store by it, and thry to presarve it by every mōnes in our power, when every day and every hour of it, is intended for the making of our etarnity?"

Frank made no answer, and if he was once more forced to feel what an element of order, patience, and long suffering, this belief in a future existence, when vividly impressed upon the mind and put into living action, might be made to constitute in the social existence of the poor, he did not feel bound to confess it even to himself; but took his leave in silence, after having added his mite to Evelyn's for the relief of the poor widow and her next door neighbour.

His next step was to the police office, and after a long conference with one of the authori-

ties there, he proceeded to accomplish the business which had brought him in the first instance to the city.

This took him rather a longer time than he had expected, and it was past eleven o'clock before he found himself in Fleet Street, on his way back to the "Ferns." He would not call a cab, however, but continued to walk on, lost in thought, and quite unconscious of every thing around him, until he reached a crossing where a crowd was rapidly collecting round the barrow of an old apple woman, which had been upset.

This accident compelling him to pause, he stood for a moment beneath a lamp post just opposite a wretched alley which at this point joined the main street, and he was looking, as an idle or pre-occupied man will look, listlessly down it, when he caught sight of a woman at the other end, running wildly towards him. Another moment, and she was in his arms; but was it, or could it be his own bright Lily, the little, dainty idol of his luxurious home, that now lay panting upon his bosom, with loosened hair and shawl scarce wrapt around her, and blood stained

face, putting such evidence of a pothouse brawl upon her, that involuntarily he muttered between his teeth, "D——tion, she is drunk."

Scarcely had the words passed his lips, ere another figure showed itself in the lane, not following Lily however, but going the other way. It was but a single glimpse caught in the glimmer of a distant lamp, but Frank felt certain that he was not mistaken. Lily's seducer was not two hundred yards before him; and forgetting all else in the desire of vengeance that instantly filled his breast, he flung his hapless sister from him, regardless, or perhaps unconscious of the faint cry of "Brother! Brother!" that broke from her pale lips, and rushed after Frederick. Fortunately long before he could reach the spot where he had seen him, the latter had turned into another street, and after a vain search through at least half-a-dozen of the lanes that branched off on either side of the one he had entered first, Frank was fain to confess that his enemy had escaped him. Then it was indeed, that with a double pang of shame and remorse he remembered his wretched sister! His

chase after Frederick had occupied a much longer time than he had supposed; and the bells of the city were already chiming midnight. Almost an hour had therefore elapsed since he had flung her from him, as much in shame (so he now confessed with bitter sorrow to himself) at the degradation of being claimed by her publicly in her altered guise, as in his desire of revenging himself on her destroyer. What might not have happened to her in the mean time? and whither had she come from after all? From whence, or from whom had she been endeavouring to escape? He shuddered as he asked himself the question, for his first idea that she had been engaged in a drunken brawl was shaken by an after recollection of the piteous eyes she had raised to his, and the soft despairing cry she had uttered, when he cast her so proudly from him. Unheard and unheeded both had been, in the storm of passion which convulsed him then, but now that he was calm again, they returned to wring his very soul with sorrow and remorse. That cry was still ringing in his ears, those blue eyes seemed to haunt him. Why had he been too proud to question

her? Why had he not paused to listen to her tale. Yet should that tale have proved what he had at first suspected, how could he have taken his dishonoured sister to his bosom,—how have stood quietly to listen to the story of her wrongs, and his own disgrace in the midst of the gaping mob by whom they had been surrounded? At the bare thought, all the strong passions of his nature, before which reason perforce stood powerless, and which religion had never taught him to control, rose up once more to do battle in his bosom. Alas! for the man who has no better prop than reason in the hour of his worst temptation! Frank would infallibly have killed his cousin, had he come across him at that moment; he felt almost as if he could have killed his sister also. He was still struggling with the fierce temptation, as he retraced his steps to the place where he had left Lily; but when he reached it, she was there no longer. The revulsion of feeling had well nigh killed him. Scarcely knowing what he was about, he looked round him in a vacant manner. He was almost alone. The crowd had moved away, the pale girl her-

self had vanished like a dream, and the streets so busy and full before, were now silent and deserted as the grave. Only the old Irish woman, whose barrow had been the original cause of his adventure, still lingered on the scene; and even she was busily engaged in packing up her goods, previous to her final departure for the night. One short hour before, and Frank Montgomerie would have sooner died than have addressed such a person upon such a subject; but now, pride was swallowed up in remorse and fear of what might have happened to Lily in his absence, and after one brief, bitter moment of hesitation, he inquired—"If she could tell him what had become of the young girl who had passed that way an hour before."

"Troth, and wherever she is, she's wid them as 'ill take betther care of her, nor may be you done yerself, young man," was the surly and uncompromising reply; for old Judy had witnessed both the appeal of Lily and its repulse, and never for a moment suspecting their real relationship, had concluded naturally enough, that Frank was



her seducer, and had given all the sympathy of her brave old heart to the girl whom she thought ill used.

“But where is she gone to,” repeated Frank; thrusting what he hoped might prove a sufficient bribe into the old woman’s horny fingers.

“You’d have done wiser mabouchal, not to have paid for your answer afore you got it,” replied the hag in a tone of cool derision. “Be-ca’s’e you see Judy Flanagan isn’t the woman to get her frinds into throuble at any price, let alone a poor, purthy, frightened little colleen like that. Shure wasn’t her face all stramin’ down red blood already, and how do I know but what you done her a mischief afore I came on yez—or that you mightn’t be for murdherin her entirely if you cotched her again. Howsomdever I don’t mane to charge you for what I won’t sell you, so here’s your blood money for you, and mind you don’t choose Judy Flanagan, when you do be wanting any dirty work done for yez another time.”

And right into his face the ‘blood money’ was



flung that instant, after which vigorous expression of her feelings, old Judy stumped away, leaving Frank to return, harassed and very wretched as we have seen, to relate his adventure to Miss de Burghe.

## CHAPTER XIII.

JUDY FLANAGAN had not sat six and twenty years at the corner of a London street, without having become perfectly cognisant of the fact, that she would take nothing but trouble by any interference with the quarrels and concerns of its passengers. Nevertheless, on seeing the way in which poor Lily had been rejected by her brother, she so far departed from her ordinary system, as to mutter a heavy curse on the "thraytor, who had, may be, ruined the poor girril, and deserted her aftherwards;" and she was about to offer yet more efficient sympathy in the shape of assistance, when another person stepped forward, while

she was still trying to disentangle herself from the barrow.

It was Esther, who happened to be passing by at the moment, and who caught Lily just as she was falling to the ground. The Irish woman came up directly afterwards, and between them they carried the wretched and almost insensible girl to the low bench, which was Judy's usual accommodation by the side of the barrow.

"Is your lodgins far from this," Esther asked abruptly—"or do you know any one nigh handy, who would give this poor gal shelter for the night?"

"Troth I won't say that I live so far off myself, that we couldn't carry her there betune us," replied old Judy, divided between the pity she really was feeling for poor Lily, and that same jealous love of the "respectable" which in part, at least, had driven Frank from his sister's side that night. "But shure it isn't wid the likes of her that Judy Flanagan has ever been in the habit of consortin'; and how do I know, young woman, that I mayn't get into throuble wid the polis myself, av they find her along wid me."

"Hear to me," replied Esther, speaking in that clear, cut crystal sort of voice, which people, used to meet emergencies and control them, are in the habit of employing at such moments. "Sorrer and shame, and sin too, enough there is, God-knows, on the head of this unhappy crittur, but not sich a sin as man cares for to punish. She's neither a thief nor yet a brawler—and see," she added, lifting the curls that fell over Lily's face, and thus revealing the exceeding youthfulness of the poor child whose cause she pleaded, "she is almost a infant still—and she has a mother as has never ceased to mourn her, and a home to which she can return no more."

"Musha, but it's mighty fond of them all you do be grown upon a suddint," replied the old woman, eyeing Esther rather suspiciously, as her street experience most certainly entitled her to do. "Maybe it's friends or relations of your own, they are, young woman, that you are taking their throuble to heart so."

"Exceptin' this 'ere child, I never set eyes on none of 'em, and I don't know nothin' wotever

about her, even to her name," said Esther, solemnly. "But if so be, as they are human critturs like ourselves, there must needs be sorrow and shame among 'em over this young gal, as has fallen so low in life, and as maybe they expected would have soared so high. Howsomdever you needn't trouble about her if you don't like to, for I knows a many a one as good and better, who arn't altogether to say so partic'lar."

"Hoity, toity," exclaimed old Judy, more moved than it suited her purpose to appear, by Lily's pale face and Esther's earnest manner. "But it's in a hurry you are, me lady! And who towld you pray, that Judy Flanagan was ever the baste to dhrive any one from her doore, that axed for its shelter? No, no, I mind me too well of the sorrow and heart break that was on myself, when I came first to London, a slip of a thing, maybe just her hoith; and the Lord, He knows it, a black, bitther London it would have been to me, if He hadn't sent a friend to stand betune me and harrum! I mind me too well of that time, ever to refuse to a fellow-craythur the help that I got myself, when I'd have died, or (Lord

save us), done worse p'raps, if I'd happened to want it. So bear a hand, will you, my woman, and we'll have her as quite and comfortable as if she war the queen herself, at my little place, in a jiffy."

No sooner said than done. One brown, brawny arm was round Lily in a minute, and elbowing her way manfully, or womanfully through the crowd with the other, the strong old woman easily succeeded, even without the aid of Esther, in bearing Lily from the street, and depositing her in the damp, black looking cellar, which she had so boastfully designated as "her little place." No sooner was this done, and the sick girl safely deposited on the turn-down bedstead in the corner, than remembering the jeopardy in which she had left her barrow, old Judy stumped off again to remove it from the street. It was while in the act of doing this that, encountering Frank for the second time, she refused him that knowledge of Lily's whereabouts, which she firmly believed he only sought for the purpose of inflicting bodily injury upon her.

Poor Judy was not very skilful in reading countenances, or she would certainly have been moved by the agony that was depicted on Frank's as he walked away. Supposing, on the contrary, that he was merely disappointed at missing his prey, she could not resist a sly chuckle at his expense, and the grin was still on her face when she reached her own abode, though it changed into a look of real anxiety the instant her eye fell upon Lily.

"How is the poor colleen now, alanna? How is the poor colleen now?" she enquired of Esther.

"Better I should say," returned the other. "But she seems stupified and stunned like, and I carn't say, as I quite like the looks of her eyes—I doubt if she sees much, for as wide as she opens 'em now and again, as if she war frightened still."

"Maybe a cup of tay would revive her, it's an iligant thing for the sperits, when it's tuck, as it ought to be, screechin hot; and if you'll jist hand me that owld match box on the shelf for-nint you, my dear, I'll light a bit of fire and have the wather bilin like mad, in a twinklin."



Esther did as she was desired, and a pause ensued in the conversation, during which the old woman employed herself vigorously in lighting the fire, while Esther was as sedulously occupied in chafing the hands and feet of the pale and still almost insensible girl on the bed. Judy evidently thought this but a poor and inefficient remedy; for as soon as she had succeeded in puffing the embers into a blaze, she observed in a private and confidential manner: "What dosay to givin' her a sup of potsheen? I've a dhrop of the rale ould sort in the cupboard beyant, which I keep for wet nights; for what wid the cowl'd, what wid rain and fog, the wind do be always gettin' into my stomach, and sorra thing but a dhrop of the 'craythur' ever sets it aisy again."

"Give her pisen at once, then," said Esther, shortly; "'twill be quicker nor fever. Look here's a cut on her head may give us trouble enough without your petsheen to set her mad, as I've seed it do many a one, stronger and more accustomed to licker nor she."

"The Lord be betune us and harrum," said old Judy, crossing herself devoutly. "But if

that is to say any ways likely, wouldn't it be bettther to get a docthor to her at wanst. There's a mighty clever gentleman lives only three doores from this one."

"I don't knows as that will be altogether needed neither," said Esther, who had a professional reluctance, that was quite unconquerable, to the bringing more eyes than were absolutely necessary upon herself or her companions. "Cuts like this one heals quickly enough when they ain't too much fussed about in the beginning; and as to the heart sickness that over and above all the rest is upon her now, there ain't never a doctor in all this great, rich city, as could give she or any of us the real remedy for that."

"Thru for you," said the old woman gravely. "It's God alone can do that for her, poor colleen, may His blissed mother watch over her, and keep her to repintance. But see, I've made a roarin' cup of tay, and if you can only pervail on her to swally a mouthful, she'll be twiced the girril she was an hour ago, or my name isn't Judy Flanagan, and I never sowled apples or oringes at the corner of Fleet-sthreet!"

Judy Flanagan was right, and the tea did revive Lily; but, alas! a return to consciousness was necessarily, in her case, a return to misery also. As the terrible events of the past evening began to force themselves on her recollection, she moaned so sadly, and the tears gushed so thickly and despairingly from her eyes, that Esther could not find it in her heart to leave her, even for a few hours, as she had at first intended.

The good old Irish woman would have gladly watched over her sick guest during the night, notwithstanding that the nature of her avocations compelled her to be in the streets at an early hour of the morning; but when she found that Esther was willing to take this duty on herself, she assented readily enough, rolled herself up in a tattered cloak, (Lily was in possession of her only bedstead) and putting an old basket under her head, by way of a pillow, was soon fast asleep in a warm corner near the fire place.

Left to herself, and her own reflections, Esther could not but feel very uneasy at the turn which affairs had taken. She saw that Lily would be

ill for many days, and both in body and mind, would require constant tending. The first she felt might safely be entrusted to old Judy, for she was a keen eyed observer of those with whom she came in contact, and she read at a glance the genuine good heartedness of her hostess; but not so the latter. "Who shall minister to a mind diseased?" This was the substance of Esther's thought, though not precisely the form in which it presented itself to her mind; and the answer suggested by her own good sense was to the effect, that while she, from her knowledge of the chief circumstances of Lily's case might have a chance of soothing, any one in ignorance of them could only irritate and annoy. Over and above too, this natural and womanly desire to sympathise with the sufferer, she felt that there might be danger to herself and her associates in the nature of Lily's possible communication with old Judy. With her impetuous temper the former was little likely to conceal anything she knew about them; and how much, or how little that might be, or how far Frederick's imprudence might have betrayed the real nature of his occupation

to his young companion, Esther was absolutely ignorant at the moment. Vaguely, and like a shadow also, the thought had begun latterly to float through her mind, of the possibility of interposing successfully between Frederick and his victim, and of restoring the poor girl to her friends. How this was to be done without the risk of more danger to herself and to her comrades, than Esther had by any means as yet made up her mind to incur, did not appear very clear at present. Nevertheless the first step towards such a consummation evidently consisted in remaining constantly at Lily's side, and guarding against Frederick's discovery of her present retreat. This she accordingly made up her mind at once to do, with all the promptitude and steadiness of her bold, determined nature. To carry out her plan, indeed, it would be necessary to separate herself for a time from Aileen; a thing she could not even think of, without a pang of sorrow. However, she hoped it would be but for a few days only; and partly to recommend the poor child in the meantime to Dick's care, partly to acquaint him with her present purpose and

abode, she determined to take advantage of the sleep into which Lily had fallen at last, in order to obtain an interview with him.

Being acquainted with the precise locality in which he was at present carrying out his peculiar avocations, she had no difficulty in doing this. The spot happened to be close at hand, and her business was accomplished, and she was seated again by Lily's bed, long before her ancient hostess had roused herself from her first slumber. The latter event, in fact, did not occur until the exact moment when habit had made it second-nature to her to bestir herself; and then, precisely at the same hour in which she had done the same thing for years before, old Judy opened her eyes, yawned, stretched herself, and rose from her hard couch, to commence her double preparations for the breakfast table and toilette. Neither the one nor the other, it must be confessed were of a very onerous description; but to make amends for the little time they cost her, no sooner was the fire lighted, and the kettle placed in a favourable position on the coals, than old Judy went plump down upon her knees, and proceeded in



a very audible voice to perform her morning devotions.

From the side of Lily's bed, where, with the short exception of her interview with Dick, she had been sitting through the live long night, Esther watched the old woman from beneath her half closed eye-lids. She thought upon Aileen's prayers on the night of her appearance at the 'Red-house;' and at first it seemed strange to her, that the young child nursed in the lap of luxury, and the old woman grown grey in the squalor of the street and cellar, should yet be united and made resemblant to each other by the same earnest desire and necessity for prayer. The vision of the young child kneeling, had indeed, touched her heart at once, while at first, perhaps, she was more amused and puzzled than otherwise affected by the self-same action in poor Judy. But uneducated as she was, there were yet deep sources of thought in Esther's soul; and now she revolved the past and present in her mind, until she learned almost to feel as if there were more positive beauty in the devotion of the ancient woman than in that of the child, heightened



though the latter was, by the irresistible adjuncts of grace and beauty.

Prayer is so naturally the language of childhood, so inevitably the expression of its dependence on others, that every spoken wish resolves itself unconsciously into prayer upon its lips. But the prayer of the aged—that prayer to which they have not thought it humiliation to have recourse, even in the days of their utmost vigour—prayer which throughout a long, troubled life time has been alike their defence in the hour of danger—their cry of gratitude in the day of joy—their strength and solace in that of sorrow—prayer which has bound each day to the service of the God who gave it, and linked time and eternity for them in a golden chain together—the prayer of the aged with all it tells of faith, and hope, and charity, and long suffering—of distrust in self and confidence in God,—that prayer appealed to Esther's imagination in a way that the prayer of the child had had no power to affect her. She thought upon it, and upon all it might be to the heart of the woe worn sinner, until she entirely forgot the bodily

presence of old Judy, became unconscious even of the uncouth ejaculations in guttural Irish, or in English, almost as guttural and uncouth, which had only amused or puzzled her in the beginning, —saw nothing—heard nothing—remembered in fact nothing, except the spirit of that prayer as it went up to the throne of God, and its sweetness, as it redescended like heavenly dew on the heart, that weary and sorrowful perhaps, had breathed it upwards.

It is not to be supposed indeed, that these thoughts occurred to Esther in the same order, or with the same precision that we have laid them down. They were stirring vaguely in her mind for all that, and albeit, she could not have put one of them into words, they had such power to make her weep, that she was fain to hide her face in both her hands, that her tears might be hidden also. But she was not long left to their indulgence. Lily's soft cry as she woke from her uneasy slumber, soon called her to her side; and while she applied herself to soothing the nervous fears which the unwonted place in which she found herself, had excited

in the invalid, old Judy fulfilled her own idea of the duties of a nurse, by concocting a cup of tea, as hot and strong, as the most unconscionable lover of the fragrant herb could possibly have desired. This, with a morsel of toast, which the kind-hearted old woman had almost burnt off her fingers in making, she delivered to the care of Esther, with an intuitive delicacy of feeling, which taught her that the invalid would be far more willing to take it from the latter, than herself. She then proceeded to search her stores, for all manner of old cloaks and petticoats, which, after they had been rolled up into a good sized bundle, she placed behind the bolster, in order, as she expressed it, to give the poor colleen a "back," and enable her to "sit up aisy and comfortable to the atin' of her breakfast."

"You see, acushla," she observed in explanation, for she fancied that Esther was looking with some wonder in her eyes, at the vast variety of articles thus brought to light: "I'm forced to keep more nor one kind of coat (petticoat), by rayson of there bein' so many different sorts of

weather in this big rampageous, city. There's the yallow fog," she continued, beginning to reckon on her fingers—"though to be shure that's not so bad as it looks, in regard that it neither wets, nor is, that to say, cowl'd nor chilly—and there's the Febuairy mist that sticks round you like a wet blanket, and sinds the shivers through you as though you had an ague—and there's the aisterly wind, wid sleet and hail nippin' you all to pieces, as if you war a cabbage leaf, or a young pitaty—and as if all them changes warn't enough, and too much, besides, there's the everlastin' drizzle, drizzle, drizzle of small rain, which is by far the worst of them all, bad cess to it, soakin' you down to the bare skin, and makin' you feel as if your very bones were running in cowl'd wather—glory be to God, all the same," she concluded, crossing herself devoutly—"for shure it's His own weather, and it's He that sinds it, whatever it is, the Lard Jasus forgive me for swearin' at it jist now."

"Be'ant there no rain in the country as you comes from?"

Esther could not resist the question, for with-

out possessing any very extensive geographical knowledge, she had somehow a vague impression, that Ireland was situated in the rainy quarter of the globe.

“Musha, to be sure there is, aroon. Why wouldn’t there! but then it’s God’s own rain coming straight down from the skies above yez, fallin’ light and bright, and pure, and sweet as the dew upon a primrose; while your London showers look for all the worreld as if they’d been sweepin’ chimlies, and dhrivin against dead walls, and washin’ off the mud and dirt from every house top in the street, afore ever they come nigh you. Divel a lie I tell you, jewel, but av you’ll believe me, you might wash the very duds (clothes), on your back, by only walking down Sackville Street, in a shower of rain, and troth if you thried that same in Fleet Street, it’s as black as the naygur that sweeps the crassin you’d be, for only a single wipe of them dirty drizzles.”

“That I would, sure-lie,” replied Esther, who seeing she had touched upon a tender subject, was very willing to confess herself defeated, in

order that she might give all her attention to poor Lily; coaxing her tenderly as ever mother to her orphan child, to the eating of her breakfast.

In this congenial task old Judy assisted with a right good will; every now and then endeavouring to encourage the invalid by sundry such well meant exhortations as—"Dhrink it up while it's hot, my honey—sure it's the best of black tay, it is,—trust ould Judy for that—two hogs and a-half the pound—no less, and dear enough, too, for sartain; but I must have the tay whatever else is wantin'. And why wouldn't I plaize myself, when there's no one else to the fore to do it? So dhrink it up afore it gets cowl'd, my jewel—dhrink it up—it'll rise the heart on yez, and aftherwards you'll sleep like a top, or a pollis man on duty."

And so she continued to run on, until Lily, less to please her tormentor, than to rid herself of the torment, drank off a portion of the scalding liquor, and then turning herself towards the wall affected to be once more asleep.

Esther saw that so long as the talkative old



woman continued near, the poor invalid would have no peace. She was never better pleased in her life, therefore, than when Judy, at the conclusion of their breakfast informed her, that she would be left for some hours to her own devices, as she intended to betake herself and her barrow to the corner of the street, which for years had been the scene of her daily labour. Unluckily the look of relief with which the girl received this intelligence, and the eagerness with which she promised to have the fire lighted, and the kettle boiling in time for their evening meal, roused the suspicions of old Judy, as to the cause of such an evident desire for her absence; and she unceremoniously retorted :—

“Divil a doubt but you will, if I let you. But in the mane time, I’m thinking that may be your friend wouldn’t mind sparing me a couple of them coats that I riz up her boulster wid.”

“Why you don’t mean to say that you’ll put on more than you’ve got on already, sure-lie?” replied Esther, quite unconscious of the real meaning of this arrangement, and sending an astonished glance towards the huge rotundity of



black stuffs and lindsey woolseys, which she had seen the old woman don that morning.

“Not in fine weather,” was the unhesitating reply. “But it looks mighty black over head, and I’m fearful of a storm bye-and-bye.”

Esther was silent, but she could not refrain from smiling, for, as if in flat contradiction of this assertion, the sun came darting in that very moment through the dingy window, filling the low cellar with unwonted brightness.

“Shure, if it isn’t rainin’, it will rain, so where’s the use of talking?” persisted old Judy, crossly. “Any way, I must have my iligant Sunday coat, for I can’t afford to have it either spiled or stolen.”

In pursuance of this intention, she walked straight up to the bed, for the purpose of taking the petticoat in question from it. But it so happened, that Lily had fallen asleep with her head resting on the very article she prized so highly, and her fair hair looked all the fairer and the brighter, and her pale cheek, all the paler and the softer for the dark coarse texture that relieved their beauty. Something there was in

the picture surely, which touched the old woman's heart, and triumphed even over the very natural desire of saving her property from the chance of robbery.

"The poor, purthy, broken hearted little darlint," she muttered half aloud, as she bent over the sleeping girl—"Ochone! but it makes the heart heavy widin one, to think of what she, and the likes of she do come to, in this great, big, blackguard of a city. Well! well! come what will of it, I'll lave it wid her, for troth it 'ud be a sin and a shame, it would, to be stirin' her up now, when her dhrammes are most likely brighter, and betther, nor her wakin' thoughts will be ever agin—the craythur!"

And as she finished this soliloquy, old Judy moved away with a firmness that was really heroic, if we consider that it was not the safety of her favorite garment only that was at stake, but that also of an old worsted stocking, which she had plunged for security into the deepest of its pockets, and which actually contained more half crowns, sixpences and shillings, than

their owner knew well how to reckon—the result of many a day of sunshine and of shower, spent in her vocation in the streets of London.

Esther had been no unmoved observer of this little scene; and she was hardly less touched by the tenderness which had shrunk from depriving Lily even of such shadowy happiness as a dream could give her, than humbled at the suspicion of her own honesty which it evinced, and which conscience whispered, was but too well justified by the nature of her previous habits.

Alas! for poor Esther! She had already learned all too bitterly in the course of her short life, how inadequate mere professions are for the recovery of that good opinion we have justly forfeited. Naturally anxious therefore though she was to reinstate herself in the good graces of old Judy, she made no other effort towards doing so, than by placing half a sovereign in her hand, and saying, with a timidity of voice and manner very unusual to her:

“ Trouble and worry we must be to you, I’m afeard so long as we bide with you; but expense we needn’t, and if this will do for the present—”

But Judy stopped her short by putting back the money, and saying sternly :

“ Put up your gould, young woman, and if so be as you came honestly by it, may it prosper wid you into thousands. But if you didn’t,” and Judy laid a very perceptible stress upon the alternative; “ if you didn’t, may the Lord wash out the sin, and keep you to repentance.”

Tears rushed to Esther’s eyes at this unexpected rebuff, but she made no answer. Her silence, however, did more for her than the most passionate denials could have done, and Judy’s heart soon smiting her for what seemed like over harshness to a fellow-creature, she added earnestly : “ Well, well, acushla, it’s no use crying over what can’t be minded now, and sure what are the best of us but sinful craythures after all—the Lord look down on us and keep us from timptation. So dry your eyes, alanna, and who knows but what at the great day you mayn’t be putting some of us to shame that do be cocking up our noses at you now, for wasn’t Mary wickeder nor Martha; and yet, who but she was to sit at the feet of the Lord Jasus, like a lady, while the

other was kep' all as one as a sarvant at His ilbow."

This oration was no sooner ended than old Judy bundled off to her own affairs; and if in the midst of the bustle and excitement of the day, of the chaffing with old customers, and enticing new ones, some anxious thoughts would turn towards the 'iligant Sunday coat,' with its secret hoard of silver beneath the pillow of the invalid, still this fact in no ways interfered with the habitual charity of that good, old, Irish heart, or with the sending up of many a fervent prayer for the poor, pretty, broken-hearted colleen whom Providence had conducted to her door.

END OF VOL. II.









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